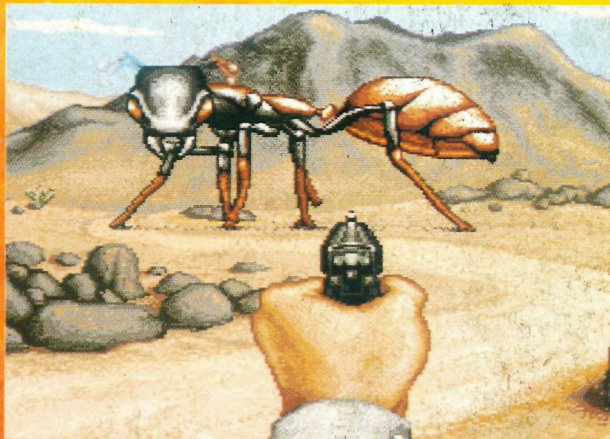


ISSUE 4 WINTER 1990 £1.95

PC

Leisure

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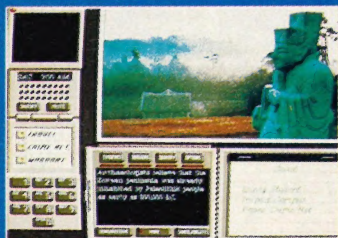
titles:

Silpheed
Space Quest III
Police Quest II
Leisure Suit Larry II
King's Quest IV
Leisure Suit Larry III
The Colonel's Bequest
Hero's Quest

POL11/90



Donald, Mickey and Goofy make their VGA debuts, as Disney Software opens for business, see page 16.



You've loaded the disk, now read the review. The *Carmen Sandiego* series is put to the test on page 24.



For everything you've always wanted to know about joysticks - and probably a bit more besides - see page 35.



Ever fancied building a world of your own? Now you can with *SimEarth* from Maxis and Ocean. See the review on page 30.



He's as tough as old boots - and only marginally more attractive - but that won't stop *Rick Dangerous* from getting his man. Turn to page 57 for news of Rainbird's long-awaited sequel.

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PC Leisure

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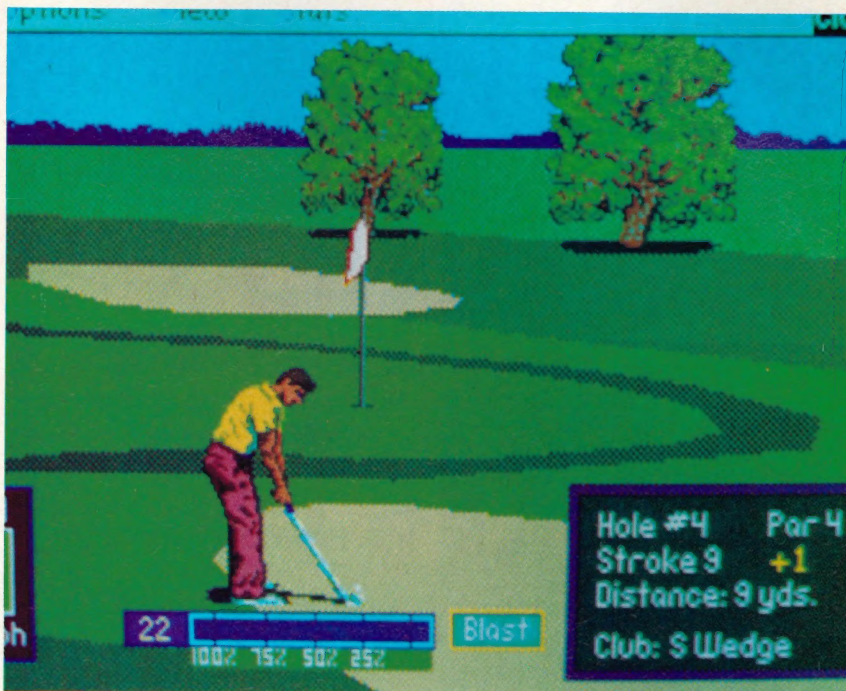
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No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form (either electronic or mechanical) without the publisher's express written consent. I mean, what do you think this is, Shareware? Actually now that I come to think of it, just what does that last sentence actually mean. Okay, I know what we're trying to say when we say "No part of this magazine may be reproduced," and so on,

THE DISK

Here, by popular demand is the first ever PC Leisure disk, featuring playable demos of...

**Broderbund's
Where In Europe
Is Carmen
Sandiego?
And Electronic Arts'
PGA Tour Golf**



Go for a drive with the *PGA Tour Golf*, courtesy of Electronics Arts...

DISK DETAILS

To fit both of these demos onto a single disk, they have been compacted using PKWare's *PKZip* utility. In order to run either program, it must first be decompact onto another disk (either using a second drive or the hard disk). To execute this, simply follow the separate instructions for each game on the opposite page.

DISK REPLACEMENT

If you would like a copy of this disk on 3.5" format, simply send a cheque or postal order for £1.50 (to cover the cost of the disk, and

handling charges) made payable to PC Wise Ltd, to:

PC WISE
Unit 3
Merthyr Industrial Park
Pentrebach
Merthyr Tydfil
Mid Glamorgan CF48 4DR

This address should also be used for returning faulty disks (along with a short note describing the problem). However before returning the disk, it may help to call PC Wise on (0443) 693233, to see if the problem can be sorted out without making a return.



...or see the world with Broderbund and *Carmen Sandiego*.

PGA TOUR GOLF

This accurate and realistic golf simulation walked away with the grand prize in our 'Which golf package?' feature in Issue 2. And if you haven't already got a copy here's your chance to find out just what exactly made it stand out from the rest.

In this specially prepared demo, Electronic Arts' has played through an entire PGA tournament - well, almost... it's nearing the end of the fourth round and you're lying in second place behind Craig Stadler, who's three shots ahead and already in the clubhouse.

It's going to take all you've got to make up those three shots - especially when you see how difficult the 17th is - but play to the best of your ability and who knows what may happen?

LOADING

To install this *PGA Tour Golf* demo on your hard disk, create a new directory called 'Golf' (consult your DOS manual for information on creating directories), then change to

your floppy drive and type :

Golf C:\Golf

The PGA Tour Golf demo data will now 'explode' into a useable form on your hard disk.

To install the game using a twin-floppy machine, boot up in the normal way. When this is done, insert the demo disk in drive A and a blank formatted disk in drive B and type the following:

Golf B:

The PGA Tour Golf demo will now transfer onto your second floppy disk, fully ready for use.

When this process is complete, simply type 'Golfdemo' and the program will load automatically.

PLAYING THE GAME

The first screen you come to is the PGA Pro Shop. Using your mouse (or the highlighted letters on the top of screen bar) select 'Play' from the menu, then scroll down to 'Tournament' and click on that (if you haven't got a mouse installed, use the cursor and Enter keys).

At this stage you enter your name before heading off for the tournament tent. Following a quick look at the leader board (with your name up there in second place), it's off to take your first shot at the 16th tee. A view from a helicopter-mounted camera starts at the pin and swoops low over the length of the fairway giving a clear view of what lies ahead. And to help even further, one of the PGA Tour's top professionals gives advice which is displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Before you take your first swing, check the wind's speed and direction (using the arrow displayed in the bottom left of the screen) and adjust your direction by moving the flashing white cross with the left and right cursor keys. The correct club is automatically selected, but if you want to change this for any reason, use the up and down keys to choose your own favourite.

To execute the shot, watch the power meter which is situated directly below the on-screen golfer.

The number on the far left of this bar represents the distance the ball will travel if struck with maximum power, so see how that relates to the distance to the hole, as displayed on the bottom right of the screen.

Next, tap the mouse button (or space bar) once and a bar will begin to rise within the meter. When this bar has travelled as far as you want it to (check the percentages of power below the meter to gauge your shot's strength) tap the button again and the bar will begin to fall. A third tap stops the bar as close as possible to the 0 per cent line - the degree of variation to the right or left of this line determines how much your shot will hook or slice (note: it's possible to hit the ball at more than 100 per cent of full power, but this in turn exaggerates the effects of the hook and slice).

Repeat this process for each shot... and see you at the nineteenth hole!

For further information on PGA Tour Golf, call Electronic Arts on (0753) 49442.

WHERE IN EUROPE IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?

Carmen Sandiego is an elusive criminal who's baffled top minds and eluded detection the world over - now having taken up your new position as a detective at the Acme agency, it's your chance to see if you can catch up with the missing mastermind.

This demo of *Where In Europe...* is a CGA-only cut-down version of Broderbund's top-selling mystery tour of the continent, designed to give you a taster of the program's entertaining and educational gameplay.

Using limited locations and allowing you to pursue only a small group of the villainess' minions, it nevertheless provides plenty of action. And who knows? You may even learn something.

LOADING

To install the demo on your hard disk, create a new directory called 'Carmen' (consult your DOS manual for information on how to create



a new directory), then change to your floppy drive and type the following:

Carmen C:\Carmen

The data will now 'explode' into a useable form on your hard disk.

To install the game using a twin-floppy machine, boot up in the normal way. When this is done, insert the demo disk in drive A and a blank formatted disk in drive B and type the following:

Carmen B:

The demo program will now trans-

fer onto your second floppy disk, fully ready for use.

When this process is complete, simply type 'Carmen' and the program will load automatically.

PLAYING THE GAME

Sign in at the desk of the Acme Detective

Agency, collect your first rank (gumshoe) and prepare to begin the process of becoming a top sleuth.

Press Enter to answer the ringing telephone, then continue to press it to read through the Chief's entire message. This will tell you the nature of the crime and where it took place, after this it's up to you.

Use the cursor keys to move the highlighted bar through the four displayed options: these in turn lead to further options, also accessed by the same method. Follow the on-

screen hints and you should be able to get onto the trail of the criminal fairly quickly.

As you give chase, the Chief occasionally gets in touch to give clues as to your quarry's habits and appearance. These can be entered into your notebook for later input into the agency's computer back at the lab.

The idea is to follow the suspect as far as possible, gathering information along the way, so that when he or she is inevitably arrested the charges will stick and you'll earn promotion. Fail to do this and the opposite occurs: the suspect gets away scot-free and you remain a plain old gumshoe all of your life.

Where In Europe is Carmen Sandiego? is just one in a whole series of educational games from Broderbund. For further information call Broderbund's UK distributor, Domark, on (081) 780 2222, or turn to our feature, beginning on page 24.

L E T T E R S

Dear Sir,

Here are just a few quick thoughts based on the Autumn issue of PC Leisure's review of *Flight Of The Intruder*, a game which we programmed and feel was treated harshly.

1. THE NUMBER OF MISSIONS

The provided missions give a good cross-section of actual mission types flown and the user is able to produce his own missions with the 'CAG' option.

2. NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT TYPES

The aircraft provided cover most of the major types in use by the US Navy and the North Vietnamese. The *Intruder* had only ground attack capability, but to say the only *Intruder* missions are bombing raids is unreasonable given the variety of weapons available: bombs, guided missiles, rockets, anti-radiation missiles.

3. FLIGHT SIMULATION

There are two levels of flight model - an easy one to allow a quick start to the game and a more realistic one. The flight models also differ from aircraft to aircraft.

4. MENUS

FOTI saves the user's menu options, so there is no need to reselect them each time you run the game.

5. BRIEFING SCREENS

I'd prefer to say that these are detailed rather than complicated. Also, for user missions the armaments waypoints etc are preset. There is also a scramble option to get eager pilots into the air quickly.

6. IN-FLIGHT CONTROLS

The process of arming a bomb is realistic rather than complex. Also, although the controls are only shown on one screen they can be operated from any view. The reason for going to the right-hand view is that this represents where the navigator sat.

7. DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF 3D ON SCREEN

Nobody forced your reviewer to press the '[' key. If he prefers to have some instruments on screen

he should keep them there. At least he had the choice. The out-of-cockpit view provides adequate information to fly by.

8. VGA/3D DETAIL

Really two different subjects. The VGA graphics used are 16-colour, this means that you get the same colour information as, say an Atari ST game, in fact slightly better, but obviously not as good as 256-colour VGA. This should be set against the fact that you get a smoother refresh rate. The level of detail in the 3D shapes has been chosen in an attempt to provide a reasonable frame rate unlike say *Their Finest Hour* or *Fighter Bomber* when approaching Mount Rushmore. The 3D covers a large area of North Vietnam and also includes a coastline and road/rail and river system.

9. BITS THE REVIEWER MISSED

The ability to plan your own missions. The possibility of moving between aircraft in flight. The way the success of any mission is based on the air wing's performance and not just a single aircraft. A lot of criticism is levelled at the features which increase the accuracy of the simulation - how do we include aircraft which were not used, or get away from the enemy using guns, heat-seekers, SAMs and two or three types of anti-aircraft gun?

Chris Oughton
Rowan Software
Runcorn

Dear Sirs,

May I just say how excellent your magazine is. However, there are a few points on which *PC Leisure* could still be improved. The non-gaming articles are fine, although they do need a more detailed facts box to summarise all of the required information.

On the subject of your game reviews, an additional piece of information is also needed. I own a 10Mhz PC and have often been disappointed with the performance of some games, so maybe you should also display the minimum speed required for a game to work effectively?

Finally, how is it that you can receive a letter saying "why do you print ú signs" and on exactly the

same page, and indeed throughout the magazine, appears the ú sign?

Alain Cottignies
Westbury-On-Trym
Bristol

Once again the infernal symbol debate rears its ugly head. Will it ever stop? We hope so!.. haven't you lot got anything better to worry about?

Dear Sir,

Although I use my PC1640 mostly for personal correspondence and accounts, and for a few applications for my local golf club, I do have a few games which the family can join in on. However, we have searched the market for a cricket game without any success - why is this?

Surely one of the software publishers is planning to bring out a simulation of our national sport.

Eric C Dyer, OBE
Loughborough
Leics

Funny you should mention it.

Anco, the company responsible for Kick Off (the superb soccer game previewed in this issue) is, as we speak, developing a cricket simulation in the same series. With any luck Bails Off will reach the same heights of playability as its footie predecessor.

Dear Sir,

As we all know, good computer games for the PC cost a bomb. Therefore, it is very annoying to find the whole game finished in your QED section. *Leisure Suit Larry II* made quite a hole in our pockets: on buying your magazine we discovered a 'walk through' solution to the game and within three hours our fun was gone.

At present we are saving for *Larry III*, so please don't do it again.

One last point before we go, could you please include a feature some time in the not too distant future about joysticks.

Marco Herbst & David Pierce
Wicklow
Ireland

PS: What is a bus, and how do we get a robot for our computer?

Sorry chaps, but we feel that you're missing the point somehow. The idea of us printing a complete solution to a game such as Leisure Suit Larry II is that you take it just as far as you want to - if you're stuck at a certain problem, you can follow the guide until you've made it through and then close the magazine again. No-one forced you to read it through to the end, so you've only yourselves to blame. As for your queries: the joystick

feature appears this issue (see page 37); a bus is a large vehicle for carrying the public from A to B; and if you want a robot for your computer, why not get your dad to make you one?

Dear PC Leisure,

In Issue 2 you said (in reply to Phil Morris' letter) that you are quite happy with your current ratings system. Why? People don't just buy a game on the strength of a screenshot, a short review and a star rating.

The reviews are good, but a summary at the end showing separate scores for graphics and sound and something like an IQ or fun factor would be a hundred times better. Then a final rating out of 100 or 1,000 would be a lot better than five stars.

James Shallcross
Pangbourne
Berkshire

Dear PC Leisure,

Having read your article on MicroProse in Issue 3, can you enlighten me as to the release date of *Elite v2.0* (or whatever it's going to be called) and when it will be reviewed by PC Leisure. Obviously I don't want to buy an old version of a game just before an update is released.

And on the subject of reviews, may I come to your defence and congratulate you on the 'star' rating system. It seems ridiculous to say that one game is worth 81 per cent while another deserves 82 (as some magazines do, and some of your readers seem to want), as what could possibly separate two games by that close a margin?

Stick to the stars.

Gareth B Callan
Clapham
Lancaster

Dear Sir,

My grandmother has seen a knitting program which allows the user to design his or her own patterns. Unfortunately she cannot remember any other details. Do you know anything about it?

Duncan Cooper
Littleover
Derby

We've put our best man on the case, so rest assured that if we come across it we'll let you know next issue.

Send your contributions to: **Letters, PC Leisure, EMAP Images, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU**, remembering to include your full name and address. Please do not include a stamped addressed envelope, as we are unable to make individual replies.

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NEWS

Not only the first with the news, but happy to deliver the most comprehensive and up to date information

service to leisure users everywhere, this issue PC Leisure brings the latest on Sierra's imminent move to Britain, the launch of an all-new (and allegedly revolutionary) software label and - for the first time - the official Gallup chart.

AN EXTRA DIMENSION

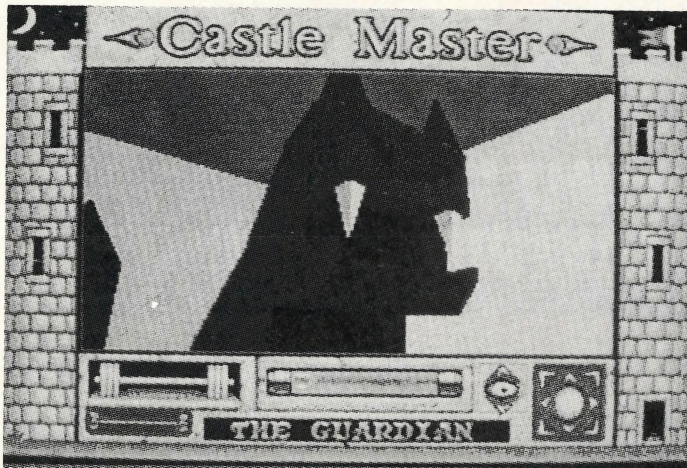
Games which use Incentive's Freescape graphics system (*Castle Master*, for example), are notable for the way that the environment is built up from simple graphic blocks and for the versatility which this allows in the gameplay: you can view the objects from any angle, zooming in and out etc.

Now Incentive is putting together a *3D Construction Kit* which will let you in on the secrets of Freescape. Indeed Incentive's Ian Andrew says that he hopes that by the time the Kit is ready, the animation of objects should be even better than that in *Castle Master*.

You can use the Kit to design your

own 'alternate reality', using unlimited numbers of blocks to build up a Freescape environment, with objects, buildings and vehicles, moving or static ("it's like Lego for adults, really," says Andrew). Then, when the world is created, you can go the whole hog and design a game to be played within it.

The program will definitely include separate CGA and EGA modes - Incentive is currently debating whether to develop a VGA mode as well. No price has yet been announced, but *3D Construction Kit* is due for release, via Domark, next April. Budding builders can call the publisher on (081) 780 2222.



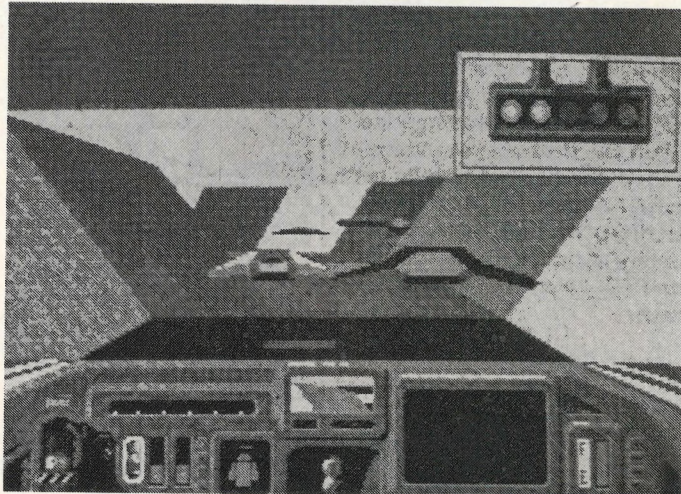
Castle Master: soon you'll be able to build your own.

STARS COME OUT FOR THE ARTS

Electronic Arts has re-released a batch of oldies at a budget price, and has created a new label, Star Performers, for the low-cost titles. Out now at \$£9.99 (for the second time) are *Bard's Tale II*, *Caveman Ugh'lympics*, *Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer*, *Keef The Thief*, *Powerdrome*, *Skate*

Or Die and *Strikefleet*.

EA's spokesman, Simon Jeffery, said that the company plans to re-release selected titles from its back catalogue around twice a year, with another batch of earlier hits coming out in the spring. Further details from Electronic Arts on (0753) 49442.



Powerdrome: new life at £9.99.

SONY'S DISKS READY TO ROLL

There can be few things more irritating than wanting to save your latest game position - and then realising you have no spare formatted disks. Now Sony, pioneer of the 3.5" floppy disk, is coming to the rescue by selling disks which come ready formatted.

You can buy your Sony 3.5" disks formatted to either 1.44Mb or 720K to cater for both high and low density drives: these are formatted to 135tpi, 80 tracks per side and double-sided, for those who like to know the technical side of these things.

Sony's Mike Hopkins says that ready-formatted disks already account for 60 to 70 per cent of the market in Japan, while around a third of US buyers have latched on to them. Details from Sony on (0784) 467000.

MORE COLOUR FOR LESS GREEN

VGA graphics are becoming more affordable, especially now that Philips has announced price cuts which bring its base level VGA monitor to retail at just under £300.

The 3CM9609 is a 14" colour model, with a maximum resolution of 1,024 x 768 pixels, and contrast, brightness, and horizontal/vertical hold adjustable controls. It's now selling for £299.99, while its big

brother, the 3CM9809, which has a slightly finer dot pitch (ie, the distance apart between the individual red, blue and green dots which make up the picture) of 0.29mm compared to the 9609's 0.39mm, now costs £349.99.

Philips has also reduced prices on its Super VGA models by £100; the cheapest of these is now just over £400. Philips is on 081-689 2166 with further details.

SIERRA STAYS PUT - FOR NOW

Activision's move to make drastic cutbacks to its UK operation doesn't mean the loss of Sierra titles to the UK. As predicted by PC Leisure (news, Issue 3), US-based Sierra, whose games were previously marketed and distributed in the UK by Activision, has set up its own UK office. Curiously, at present these offices are actually within the premises of Activision in Reading, but Sierra UK will be moving into its own home after Christmas.

Sierra's UK base will in fact be its European headquarters as the company gets ready for a continental onslaught come 1992. Sierra's Srinivasan, who is currently setting up the UK division hopes to be able to offer more in the way of customer services once the independent HQ is up and running. British-made Sierra programs are a possibility, but present plans are simply to concentrate on marketing the US-sourced titles.

The next titles due out from Sierra are *King's Quest V*, which comes on an overwhelming 11 disks (this is on 5.25" format; there are only seven disks if you have a 3.5" disk drive). It's therefore not too surprising that Sierra plans to release this and *Space Quest IV* on CD-ROM as well, where a single compact disc will take the whole program. Also in the pipeline are three Dynamix games: *Stellar 7*, *Heart of China* and *Night Of The Dragon*.

For customer support, Sierra can be contacted on (0734) 310003.

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

Virgin is to expand its 16-Blitz range of budget software with higher quality products at slightly higher prices. Chief among the reasons for upping the ante however is, according to Virgin's Andrew Wright, that some buyers were put off buying the games at £4.99 because they were "too cheap".

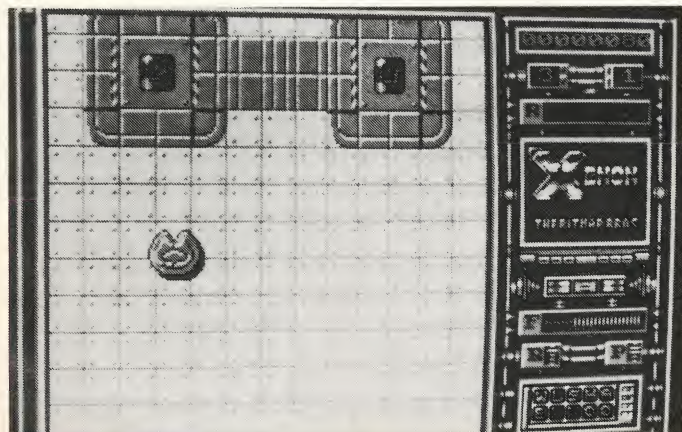
"PC owners who are used to paying over £100 for applications can turn up their noses at a game which only costs a fiver, so we've introduced a new range, 16-Blitz Plus, which will feature re-releases of hits at £7.99," he explains.

Wright believes this sort of inverted consumer snobbery has meant that PC games players have missed out: the £4.99 title *Conflict*, for

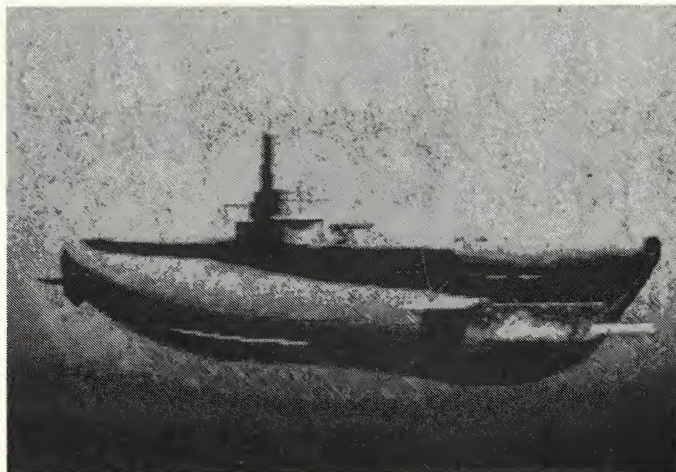
example, a strategy game dealing with war in the Middle East (and thus highly topical), is one he particularly thinks was passed over. Other reasons for the move include the higher prices being charged by other publishers for 'budget' games and the fact that some 16-Blitz games now require more than one disk in the box.

Two of the first 16-Blitz Plus titles on PC will be *Xenon* and *Double Dragon*. However, for those of you who don't indulge in price one-upmanship when buying games, Virgin will continue to release selected titles at £4.99, and doesn't intend to increase prices for any of its 16-Blitz back catalogue.

Talk to Virgin on (071) 727 8070.



Xenon: now it's a game with a 'plus'.



Silent Service II: our apologies for a £10 price difference.

CONSPIRACY CORRECTION

In last issue's review of Paragon Software's *Megatraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy*, we stated that Tetbury-based MicroProse was the company to contact. We have now been informed that this conversion of the popular table-top role-playing game will in fact be imported and distributed by Entertainment International and will appear on the Empire label.

We have also been told that the version which we reviewed was unfinished - if this proves to be cor-

rect we will publish an update in a later issue. Entertainment International can be found on (0268) 541126.

Still with MicroProse, in last issue's review of the company's updated submarine simulation, *Silent Service II*, we stated that the retail price was £24.99. This is not in fact the case, the program actually costs £34.99. We apologise for any inconvenience which this error may have caused. If you're still interested, talk to MicroProse on (0666) 504326.



Logitech's Bus Mouse Professional.

MOUSE MEN MAKE MANOEUVRES

Logitech has a new mouse on the market, the Bus Mouse Professional. At a price of £85, this rodent comes complete with a two-button set-up, a resolution of 320 dots per inch and a graphics package, *Paint Show Plus*. It can be used with any PC-compatible using the supplied serial interface, and on the PS/2, where it can be connected directly to the mouse port.

Logitech has also recently been busy cutting prices across its range of PC add-ons.

The Serial Mouse and PS/2 Mouse are both down to £65 (from £79), the standalone Pilot Mouse is now just £35 (from £49) and its handheld image scanner, ScanMan Plus, is reduced to £149 from £169. More details from Logitech on (0753) 37222.

RHYME & REASON

Users of *WordPerfect* can now buy an accessory for the word processor which finds rhyming words and homophones (words which sound the same but are spelt differently) at the press of a key. *WordPerfect Rhymers* is a TSR - terminate and stay resident - program which can be popped up over *WordPerfect* proper and used when you need it.

Rather than drumming up obscure serious functions for such a program, *WordPerfect's* marketing manager David Godwin is content to say that Rhymers "is a product that anyone can enjoy using". However, the company adds that language teachers, writers, linguists, translators, and songwriters could also find useful purposes for it.

You can ask Rhymers to find words with 'ending' rhymes, double rhymes (such as 'better' and 'letter') or triple rhymes ('lettering' and 'kettering'), assonance (similar vowel sound in words), consonance (sound-a-like words) and first syllable sound matching.

WordPerfect Rhymers costs £75 - details on (0932) 850500.

BITMAPS GO RENEGADE

Those of you who liked the Bitmap Brothers' award winning shoot 'em up *Xenon II - Megablast*, will be pleased at the news that the programming team has now signed up permanently with record company Rhythm King (which originally released Bomb The Bass' *Megablast*, the music featured in that program).

The Bitmaps and Rhythm King have set up a new publishing company, Renegade, to release future Bitmap titles, on a basis slightly different from that of most programmer/publisher tie-ups. At Renegade, head Bitmaps Eric Matthews, Mike Montgomery and Steve Kelly are directors of the new company and take an equal share of the profits from each title. Part of Renegade's stated philosophy is that the programmer should have a higher pro-

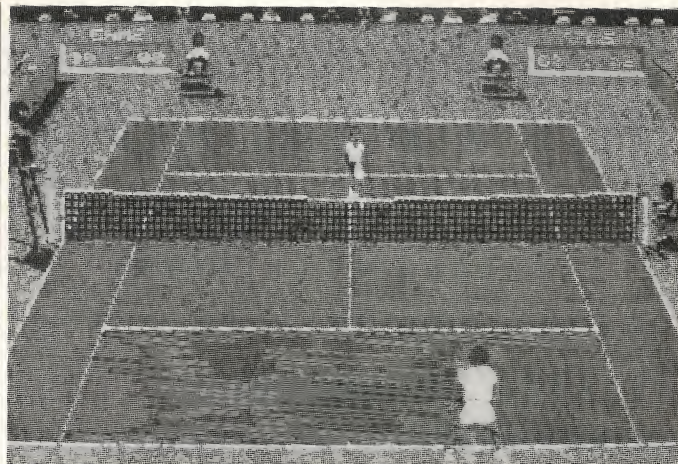
file, more of a say in marketing and packaging aspects of a game, and more of the money from selling it.

The two first Renegade games will be *Gods* and *Magic Pockets*, both of which are due out early next year. *Gods* is an arcade action game in familiar Bitmaps style, with some minor puzzle solving and loosely based on Greek mythology. *Magic Pockets* has a somewhat 'cuter' scenario as you play a small child searching for your lost toys in a magical kingdom.

The Renegade set-up has already attracted interest from other teams of programmers, more and more of whom are publishing their games independently these days (Core Design and Teque, to name but two). An announcement of a second programming team joining Renegade is expected shortly.



Renegade's Eric Matthews, Martin Heath and Tom Watson - more say for programmers.



Compilation and sequel planned for *Pro Tennis Tour*.

UBI CROSSES THE CHANNEL

Veteran French software publisher Ubi Soft has set up its own office in the UK, and is planning a wholesale onslaught on the British market.

Ex-Grandslam man Duncan Lowthian has been drafted in and thinks that the company can serve UK games players much better with a proper UK base: "It gives customers a point of contact in the country, and we want to set up helplines where we can be contacted for hints and tips and also to evaluate games from budding programmers, since we want to publish our own UK-sourced product eventually," he said.

Further good news is Ubi Soft's stated intention to support the PC with a strong line-up of games scheduled for the next few months.

At the end of November, the company is bringing out two PC packages, the *Challengers' Compilation* and the *Full Blast Compilation*. *Challengers* comprises *Pro Tennis Tour*, *Fighter Bomber*, *Stunt Car Racer* and *Super Ski*, while *Full Blast* has no less than six titles: *Ferrari Formula One*, *Carrier Command*, *Rick Dangerous*, *P-47 Thunderbolt*, *Highway Patrol* and *Chicago 90* (the observant among you will notice that though this may be published by Ubi Soft, there isn't a single Ubi-originated title in the package). Both packs will retail at £29.99.

Brand new titles include *Pick'n'Pile*, a puzzle game which involves matching balls together on-screen, at which point they disappear. Clear the lot and you go on to the next screen.

A sequel to *Pro Tennis Tour* is planned for the end of November and *BAT*, an arcade adventure with role-playing elements which has spent over two years in development, is now due to appear before Christmas.

Finally, Ubi Soft is converting more of its 16-bit titles to the PC format: *Super Puffy's Saga* and *Ranx*, which is based on a French cartoon cult hero, should be ready as you read this and *Twin World* is due out at the end of this month. Ubi's standard price for PC software is £24.99, although *BAT* will set you back £29.99.

Ubi Soft UK has yet to get its helplines sorted out, but you can contact the company at Saddlers House, 100 Reading Road, Yateley, Camberley, Surrey GU17 7RX, if you want further information.

CHRISTMAS SHOW STARTS SHOPPING

There'll be bargains galore and plenty of product demonstrations at the Computer Shopper show, which opens its doors at the Wembley Conference Centre on December 6.

The show will cover everything from games (including the Computer Football Association Challenge Cup being played out at the exhibition) to serious applications and hardware with a strong PC bias.

Alongside the conventional stands and demos, there will be several specialist centres on the exhibition floor, including areas dedicated to entertainment software, education, music and an advice clinic to help with and technical queries etc.

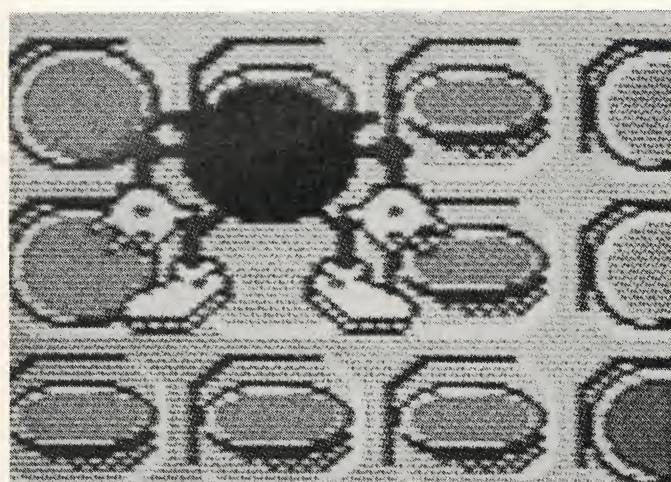
Tickets cost £4 for adults and £2.50 for children if bought in advance. There is a show booking hotline on (051) 357 1736 (24 hours), while other details are available from (0625) 879970.

VIRGIN ON THE BOARDS

Virgin Games is to release *Spot*, an unusual board-game style program in January. Similar in fashion to *Othello*, the game uses characters from the current Seven-Up advertising campaign and requires you to capture squares on the board for your own counters, before your computer opponent outnumbers you.

While the game itself is extremely simple, great things are promised of the animation and sound effects. *Spot* will cost £24.99 and should appeal especially to younger children.

On the subject of board games, the company has completely revamped its implementation of *Scrabble*. The new version, called *Ultimate Scrabble*, will be out in the New Year, boasting VGA graphics and several other options designed to make play more flexible. For further details call Virgin on (071) 727 8070.



Spot: refreshing gameplay with a twist of lemon and lime.



Indiana Jones joins the team for Lucasfilm's twin pack.

LUCAS TWOSOME

US Gold is offering two Lucasfilm adventures for the price of one with a dual pack comprising *Indiana Jones - The Graphic Adventure* and *Zak McCracken And The Alien Mindbenders*.

Zak McCracken is a jolly romp with plenty of zany humour thrown in, while Indiana Jones is an action adventure derived from the film *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*. Both games have CGA and EGA graphics and are Roland and AdLib soundboard compatible.

US Gold is also including the games' clue books in the pack: these normally sell for around £5 each. The Zak/Indy dual pack costs £29.99 and is available now. More clues on (021) 625 3388.

THE TOP TEN PC GAMES

(Compiled By Gallup)



Their Finest Hour: down to number two

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	
1	8	MINI OFFICE PROFESSIONAL Database
2	1	THEIR FINEST HOUR Lucasfilm/US Gold
3	RE	F-16 COMBAT PILOT Digital Integration
4	RE	LOMBARD RAC RALLY Mandarin
5	9	WOLFPACK Mirrorsoft
6	2	PGA TOUR GOLF Electronic Arts
7	NE	SECRET OF THE SILVER BLADES SSI/US Gold
8	NE	STRIKE FORCE HARRIER Mirrorsoft
9	NE	SUPER SKI CHALLENGE Smash 16
10	NE	TURBO CUP CHALLENGE Smash 16

NAME GAMES

A brief look at the latest licence acquisitions



Tiny plastic footballers who've been around since 1947, and who started their careers competing on discarded army blankets now make it to the monitor screen through Electronic Zoo's **Subbuteo** licence. Subbuteo- The Computer Game is due soon. More details from EZ on (0453) 887008

Watch out crime-types, Stan Lee's friendly neighbourhood **Spiderman** is webbing his way to your PC. Empire's the publisher, hanging out on (0268) 541126. 'Nuff said...



Sob-along-a-**Gazza** in his all new PC football simulation, due soon on the Empire label. They'll be crying out for this, so call now on (0268) 541126.



Lock up your horses, because US Gold has the **Godfather** licence, neatly timed to coincide with the release of Francis Ford Coppola's third film in the series. Talk family matters on (021) 625 3388.



They're back, as cute and furry as ever, but keep them away from light and water or you'll get... **Gremlins 2**. Elite's the publisher, currently available on (0922) 55852.



DOUBLE DARE YOU.

Blue Max

ACES OF THE GREAT WAR

WWI Air Combat Simulation

Take control of one of eight classic WWI fighters and find out how good you really are. Fly with the best—Richthofen, Fonck, Mannock, Rickenbacher—and learn their tricks and techniques.

- Action dogfight, solo, and team missions for one or two players using a single computer with any combination of keyboard, joystick, or mouse.
- Strategy Dogfight: For the skilled purist, Blue Max acts like a highly-intelligent strategic board game, allowing you and your opponent to work out detailed battle sequences and play back the moves in "realtime" 3D.
- 8 airplanes to choose from, each with its own highly-detailed flying characteristics.
- Perform missions with, as, or against the Aces of the Great War.
- Dozens of historical missions around 4 different locations within France.

How strong are your nerves at 2,000 feet, with an armed Fokker D.R.I on your tail? Forget glory, friend. Think survival.



VGA color
air combat
sequence



• VGA 256
3D COLOR GRAPHICS,
• ORIGINAL MUSIC,
SOUND EFFECTS FOR GAME
BLASTER, ADLIB
SYNTHESIZER
CARDS

DAS BOOT

GERMAN U-BOAT SIMULATION

Winter, 1941. The icy waters of the North Atlantic. The deeper you dive, the greater the pressure. Depth charges explode around you, banging on the hull of your U-boat like iron fists. Nerve and cunning make you the terror of the Allied convoys.

- 3D submarine warfare: For the first time, a sub warfare game lets you deal with threats below *and* above the surface in a true three dimensional environment.
- Real communications: Use the German Enigma coding machine to send and receive information.
- Many missions to choose from—into the North Atlantic and Arctic, inland along the coast of Norway, into the Bay of Biscay, and through the Straits of Gibraltar.
- 3 different levels of difficulty, from beginner to realistic.
- 3D graphics in 256 VGA colors, with multiple internal *and* external camera views in a complete 3D world.

Do you think well under pressure? How about 300 pounds per square inch of pressure? Take a deep breath, captain....



VGA periscope
view of enemy
aircraft

VGA 256 color
mine field
under North
Atlantic.



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DISNEY GOES SOFT



After almost eight decades in the movie business, Uncle Walt's little company is finally dipping its toe into the treacherous waters of software publishing. John Minson gets the lowdown.

The launch of a new software label usually merits a modicum of attention. "That's nice, but the proof of the pudding..." etc. However when the label carries the name Disney there's sure to be a buzz well before the boxes hit the shelves.

There's no need to wonder what Disney product will be like. You grew up with the cartoons - and more recently you've enjoyed its live action blockbusters, possibly without realising it. Touchstone, which bought us films as diverse as *Dick Tracy* and *Dead Poets Society*, is a division of the Disney empire. And if you've got kids yourself, you'll notice that *The Little Mermaid* in cinemas and *Snow White* on video are currently warming the hearts of yet another generation.

Disney is Donald and Mickey, Pluto and Goofy, characters we know and love. Equally, Disney is quality entertainment. You know you'll never encounter the minimal animation of He-Man or the Hero Turtles when the star's Mickey Mouse. And even the most adult Touchstone title would never nauseate you with a chainsaw-wielding psycho wearing a mask made of human skin.

With Disney it's not so much what the company's going to do, but how it's going to do it. It bursts onto the market with a range of characters which the arch-licensee, Ocean (*RoboCop*, *Batman* et al), would probably give its eye teeth to own. Now the rights to Mickey and his gang won't be available to third parties for eye teeth, arms, legs or even large amounts of moolah. This is vertical integration on the grandest scale.

All things being fair, even established software houses may be excused a shiver of fear at the first squeak of that high-pitched rodent voice, the first sighting of those satellite dish ears in the local software store. After all, who'd attend the Fun School when they could have Mickey teaching them the alphabet?

A RABBIT STEW

Perhaps there's a faint ray of hope in the track record of other film companies which have become involved in software. While they've demonstrated a proficiency in graphics, packaging and plotlines, these haven't always been matched by an understanding of playability. And one of the chief transgressors was none other than Disney itself.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit? was one of the top box-office smashes for 1988. A computer adaptation was almost inevitable, and, sure enough, one appeared on Disney's own Buena Vista label. The result revealed the dangers of

dabbling in a field which, though it may look superficially similar to what you're already doing, is in fact a whole new caper. The arcade segments were unexciting, while the CGA graphics were a travesty of the movie's lavish cartooning.

Two years on however, Disney seems to have seen the error of its earlier experiment and has called in French publisher Titus to oversee the day to day production of titles. In fact, the whole operation adopts a distinctly Gallic aura as Nathan, Parisian publisher of Disney licensed educational books and board games, is also involved. One starts to wonder whether Donald will swap his sailor's cap for a

gun, pistol or his fists. But he has to take care not to shoot any innocent bystanders as he eliminates the villains.

Next in the leisure schedule will be *Arachnophobia*. The movie, set for release in the UK on January 4, tells the tale of an oversized spider by the name of Big Bob who becomes bored with the jungle and stows away with a group of explorers when they return to small-town America.

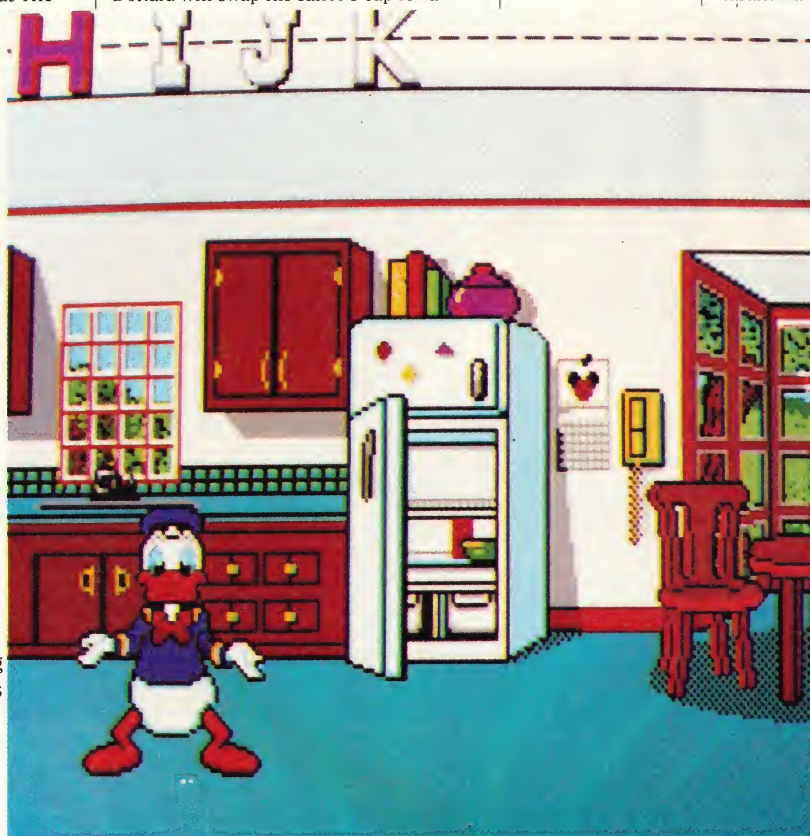
Long-time Spielberg producer Frank Marshall helmed this suspenseful yarn and even people who claim to be unmoved by creepy-crawlies have found themselves squirming as the Brazilian bird-eating tarantula hides out around the house. In

the States the film had taken over \$50 million in its first 10 weeks. The computer game is due some time after Christmas according to Titus' Louie Beatty, but all he would reveal was that: "There are spiders everywhere!"

Duck Tales provides a bridge between pure entertainment and educational software.

Disney already has a television series of the same name and a movie featuring Huey, Duey, Louie and Scrooge MacDuck will be appearing in the Spring. With 80 different destinations around the world, each featuring its own particular puzzles, this arcade adventure aimed at the younger market promises hours of play value.

Getting them young is the philosophy behind the educational titles. According to Beatty they'll cover the age range two to eight, though whether you'll want your two year old dribbling into your PC keyboard is another matter!



Donald's *Alphabet Chase*, one of many Disney Software projects which plans to combine laughs with learning.

beret!

Both companies currently have their work cut out. Disney software is poised to release eight titles in the next few months alone, covering three distinct areas. First there are pure arcade games based on live-action films; secondly there's the education, using the classic cartoon stars; and finally there's an application for ambitious computer animators.

Dick Tracy is the first entertainment release. The comic-book look that made Warren Beatty's blockbuster so striking is being carefully re-created in the game, with a limited palette of bold colours and big pictures of the grotesque villains scoffing at Dick's demise. Over 60 scenes from the film are included, ranging from the Police Station to the Milk Bar, where Dick, Tess and The Kid enjoy a refreshing pinta, and of course there's The Ritz Club where a micro Madonna struts her stuff. As Dick walks the mean streets he gets a choice of weapons, including a tommy

ALPHABET SOUP

Donald's *Alphabet Chase* is a simple introduction to letters featuring the irascible duck and teaches interaction between screen and keyboard as the child identifies the alphabet and influences the on-screen action. In *Mickey's Zoo* the numbers zero to nine provide the lesson.

Goofy's Railway Express has been developed specifically for British Rail's senior management (only kidding), but youngsters should also get some rewards from this introduction to basic shapes. In this one, hitting any key will produce a reaction on screen... and could provoke a most interesting reaction in the proud, PC owning parent if the little horror hits it too hard!

Finally, for slightly older children, there's *Mickey's Crossword Puzzle Maker*, a computerised introduction to filling-in and devising cross-words. So if the Times Cryptic starts including clues such as, 'Favourite skirt of celebrity mouse's girl-

friend,' you'll know who to blame!

Many years ago, *Sesame Street* proved that children don't realise they're learning if they're also being entertained: the marriage of Disney characters and computerised lessons should have the same effect.

The final piece of software will appeal to anybody who's ever dreamed of creating cartoons with as much style and character as Snow White or Pinocchio. *The Animation Studio* should give even the strongest competitor a 24 frames per second run for its money, just by carrying that famous signature.

Animation Studio has adopted the traditional techniques used in the cinema. Each character's movements are created on cels (so called because they were originally celluloid sheets). 'Onion skins' allow you to compare each cel with the three that have gone before, so you can check the smooth progress of an action.

MICKY IN MOTION

Two manuals explain how Disney's artists use devices such as the arc of motion, 'in-betweening' and the path of action to ensure smooth movement. Then, when you've drawn the basic characters, you can colour them, add sound effects and music and finally bring them all together for your animated spectacular. If this all sounds rather daunting, Disney animators have produced several sample sequences which you can break down and analyse, learning their secrets.

Of all the forthcoming Disney titles, this may be the single most exciting one because of the possibilities it contains, though before you consider including Mickey in your next PC presentation, you should be warned that the copyright characters can't be saved separately to disk.

With many details about these and forthcoming releases still rather vague, it remains to be seen whether this time Disney will come to terms with the software industry. Certainly the company has a wealth of titles and characters for licensing and has recognised the need for external expertise. It seems unlikely that in 12 months time we'll have dismissed it as a Mickey Mouse operation!

THE DISNEY STORY

Walt Disney and the movies grew up together. Born in Chicago in 1901, he studied at Kansas City Art Institute with the aim of becoming a newspaper cartoonist. Fortunately for the cinema, this ambition remained unfulfilled and after serving in the Ambulance Corps in the First World War he took a job in a commercial art studio.

By 1920, the movies had proved that they were more than a craze and though he was still in his teens, Disney and colleague Ub Iwerks began making animated advertisements. Wanting to do more than sell other people's products, they started to produce Laugh-O-Grams comic shorts. However, Kansas City was never destined

to rival Hollywood and the company soon went bankrupt.

Undeterred, Walt and older brother Roy went West and established their own studio in Los Angeles. Walt's taste for technical trickery was revealed in the series of cartoons he produced between 1923 and 1927: the *Alice In Cartoonland* films combined human beings and drawings. Iwerks joined him and in 1927 they created Oswald The Lucky Rabbit.

It was only a quirk of fate that stopped the world idolising a bunny rather than a mouse. Oswald was all set for stardom when Disney lost the rights to the character. Resourceful as ever, he decided to modify the ears and tail to create a new hero for his sound cartoons, a rodent by

to the company's carefully scheduled releases, targetted to attract each new generation of children, has continued to make money up to this day.

The early '40s was the first golden age of Disney animation, with *Pinocchio*, *Bambi* and *Dumbo*. From this era, *Fantasia* (1941) is rumoured to be a possible licence for the software division! However the high budgets of these state of the art, feature-length cartoons and the financial failure of *Fantasia* led to cost cutting. The company lapsed into making features which were really little more than compilations of shorts.

While the classics from the start of the decade survive to this day, *Make Mine Music*, *Melody Time* and many others

from the post-war period are long forgotten. A return to fairy tales fired a revival in the '50s. *Cinderella* marked a return to form and *Alice In Wonderland*, though Carroll purists loathed it, was another step in the right direction. *Peter Pan* and *The Lady And The Tramp* added a sheen to this second golden age. However, 1959's *Sleeping Beauty* cost \$6 million and was a financial disaster.

Once again the start of a new decade marked a new direction for Disney, but this time it was away

from its traditional attention to detail. Rather than hand-inking each character on the cels the company resorted to Xeroxing, saving money but allowing less room for individual expression. *One Hundred And One Dalmations* was popular, but the film that followed, *Sword In The Stone*, failed to hit the mark and it wasn't until 1967's *Jungle Book* that Disney had another real hit.

SIXTIES SLUMP

The world had changed and the company's product hadn't taken this into account. *Fantasia* may have been a favourite with '60s LSD trippers but the company's philosophy of wholesome family entertainment was out of step with many youngsters. Jiminy Cricket singing *When You Wish Upon A Star* was old hat - the Beatles screaming Yeah, Yeah, Yeah were the stars the kids really wanted!

Forays into live action features provided a constant line of titles, but the *Love Bug* films and the hybrid *Mary Poppins*, mixing animation and real people (if indeed sugar-sweet, wholesome Julie Andrews is a real person) was a cul de sac. Walt Disney's death in 1966 could have marked



Whoops! Unfortunate nose-enlarging action in *Pinocchio*, from Disney's first 'golden age'.

the name of Mortimer. Mrs Disney liked the idea but suggested a change of name. And the rest is history...

Steamboat Willie (1928) introduced a monochrome Mickey to audiences and made the Disney name famous. *The Silly Symphonies* series followed a year later, and in 1932 the studio made the first ever colour cartoon. But it was 1937's *The Old Mill* that introduced possibly the most important technical achievement. The multi-plane process allowed cels to be arranged with varying degrees of vertical separation, so creating an added sense of depth and perspective.

The true innovation in these early cartoons went beyond the technical though. Walt inspired his animators to turn their creations into real characters. He'd get them to watch real animals, mimic expressions, breathe life into the pencil lines. Despite his success, when Walt first suggested the idea of a feature length cartoon, his financiers thought he was mad. Costing \$1.7 million dollars, a vast amount for the time, *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs* was nicknamed 'Disney's folly' by his rivals. But it's a film which impressed audiences in 1937 and, thanks

a new beginning, but his successors at the studio failed to find a satisfactory direction.

Throughout the '70s it looked as if Disney might become an anachronism, surviving only on re-issues of its past glories. But a new broom management eventually discovered the secret for success. Recognising that the Disney name had to retain its pristine image, a new division, Touchstone Films, was launched to produce more adult entertainment.

MAKING A SPLASH

Touchstone was literally launched with a *Splash!* This mermaid's tale not only helped make Darryl Hannah a star, it established the company as an important player in tinsel town. While Touchstone has never produced out-and-out sex and violence thrillers, it can certainly delve into areas which would not normally be associated with the Disney name. What would Walt have made of Tom Cruise's seductive shaker in *Cocktail*, for example?



Not every Touchstone film has made a mint. In fact, some of them have been pretty mundane. But they tend to be solid entertainment and offer the occasional small-scale, quirky surprise, such as *Down And Out In Beverly Hills* or *Adventures In Babysitting*. Careful budgeting and studio supervision have ensured that for every less successful title there was a *Three Men And A Baby* to keep the books in the black.

Of equal importance, Touchstone's suc-

cess bought time for Disney's animators to apply themselves to their craft. The recently released *Little Mermaid* is generally agreed to be a return to the classic Disney style. And yet another division, Hollywood Films, has just been established to produce lower budget live-action features.

This is the context for Disney's move into software: itself part of the continuing exploitation of ancillary rights which takes in video, television, retailing (a Disney store opens a few doors down from Hamley's in London before Christmas), clothing, a record label... the list goes on.

The core film production side of the company continues to supply a steady stream of attractive releases to provide computer tie-ins. One can't help thinking that the man who brought so many innovations to the art of animation - sound, colour, feature length stories and Cinemascope - would have approved of bringing his greatest creations to the home computer.

He's on his way - Dick Tracy makes it from comic book to cinema and now computer game.

ANIMATION - THE DISNEY WAY

There's no mystery about how animation works. A series of still pictures shown at 24 frames per second (25 for video) move too fast for the human eye to recognise the individual images: what appears therefore is continuous movement. It doesn't matter whether the frames are photographic or drawn; the optical illusion known as persistence of vision breathes life into them.

There is, however, a great mystery about good animation. You only need to look at Saturday morning children's television to recognise how static cartoons can become when there isn't the time or money, craftsmanship or care required to go beyond a few basic moves, repeated almost endlessly.

According to award-winning animator Richard Williams, the man behind *Roger Rabbit*, by the mid-'40s Disney's artists had defined the whole vocabulary of animation. All that was left was for each succeeding generation to use or abuse it and make stylistic changes.

The secret of successful cartooning is to take everything in stages. Don't try to incorporate every element of a scene into a single process, but divide it up. For example, two characters have to walk into each other from

opposite sides of the screen. This calls for at least three elements; the background and each character. If you want foreground details, such as a lamp-post, that is yet another level. And you may construct the characters with separate cels for upper and lower parts of their bodies, for example.

Having drawn the background, to act as a reference, decide what your character will look like. Simple shapes are best. Remember Mickey's ears - whichever way his head turns they appear as circles which means: a) they always revolve to face the camera; and b) they're actually spherical.

You don't have to worry about such literal concerns when you're creating your own world. Let your heart tell you what looks right, not your head. Most of the movement in cartoons can be broken down into cycles. For

example, a walk might have a 24 frame cycle, from the left foot leaving the ground through the right foot moving, then back to the left foot again. A standard short-cut is to use the same cycle again and again, though obviously this reduces opportunities for individual expression.

The best compromise is probably to produce a sequence then add a variation or two. Perhaps every second step the sole of Goofy's shoe would flap, for example. You could also re-use the same cycle for the leg movements



while drawing the torso, head and arms as a separate cel, allowing them to behave quite differently.

Once you've decided on the speed and rhythm of the movement, draw the key positions. For a walk these could be when the left leg leaves the ground, when its foot touches the ground again, the right foot leaving the ground and its return to the start position. If you establish these basics you can then trace lines connecting the ankle, tip of the toe and knee's successive positions which provide invaluable guides when it comes to drawing the other cels or in-betweening.

Having produced a rough version of the movement, probably as a line drawing without colour or final detail, think how you can add character. Is the character

running, in which case both feet may leave the ground? Are they sneaking around in the dark on tip-toe or as if their shoes have treacle on the bottoms?

The world of animation is not a literal world. Don't be afraid to caricature movements for comic effect. When your two characters crash together their noses may flatten out, their backsides rocket out in space. Disney had his animators pull faces in front of mirrors then apply what they saw to their drawings.

Finally, have fun. Animation is about creating a world where anything is possible, so whether you're cartooning for a presentation or as a pastime, let your imagination run riot.

FAMILY MATTERS

Genealogy - the study of your own ancestral tree - is a hobby that creeps up on people unawares. The trigger could be a casual conversation with an elderly relative - next you're phoning long-lost cousins for intimate details of their family life. Finally, when the fever really grips, your home becomes dominated by index cards and gigantic family trees stuck on every available wall, while you're spending all your time visiting local libraries, registry offices and church graveyards.

Thankfully, the task can be made a lot easier by your trusty computer. A family tree is nothing more than a particular type of database structure, and databases are the PC's speciality. There are quite a number of programs available for the PC to help keep track of all that genealogical detail, most capable of printing out very pretty family trees, too.

One organisation that keeps cropping up in genealogy is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, whose members are often referred to as Mormons. One of the tenets of the Church is that the family relationships we have on Earth can be made eternal in the hereafter. This, of course, can only be done if these relationships are known, and hence their interest in genealogy. To this end they are compiling an Ancestral File that is ultimately intended to record the details of every person who has ever lived.

The International Genealogical Index, which is part of the Ancestral File, already contains around 150 million names, with some eight million being added each year. At present it is on microfiche, and can be consulted at many of the Church's Family History centres. The Church is also putting the file on CD-ROM, but at present this can only be viewed at the Church's central library in Salt Lake City.

To help genealogists collate data, the Church has produced a program called the

The advent of the personal computer is like a dream come true to those of us on a quest to trace their family's history. Matt Nicholson takes a look at three programs designed for just that purpose.

Personal Ancestral File, or PAF. This program is available in this country for £20.59 from the Church's Birmingham centre on (021) 711 2244. It stores data in the same GEDCOM format (Genealogical Data Communications) as the main Ancestral File, which allows users to benefit from the research of others. The GEDCOM format seems fairly efficient on storage space, largely using flexible field lengths, and is the nearest thing to a standard in this field.

BROTHER'S KEEPER

This is a Shareware program, which means you can try it out before you buy and only pay for it when you are satisfied it's the one you want. It has been around for quite some time and certainly looks very professional, with shadowed menu

Name	David Smith	10 Wellington, Warr	1910	1910
Born	10 Aug 1910			
Spouse	Elizabeth Smith			
Married	17 Nov 1912	10 Wellington, Warr		
Children				
Child 1	Henry Smith		1913	
Child 2	John Smith		1915	
Child 3	Lucy Smith		1917	

BIRMINGHAM 1818

Although most of the data that you need to create a family tree comes from the memories of relations and old documents, there is some information available on computer disk in the public domain. Birmingham 1818, for example contains nearly 200K of data taken from Wrightson's Triennial Directory of Birmingham, UK for the year 1818.

This is a 'comma delimited' ASCII file, listing individuals in alphabetic order with fields for surname, christian name, principal activities, other activities and street name. It is the only such disk we could find, but doubtless there are others. Let us know if you stumble across any in your travels.

boxes and even special fades from one screen and another. As with most Shareware though, there is no printed manual. Instead you have to print out a text file to get 36 pages of fairly comprehensive documentation.

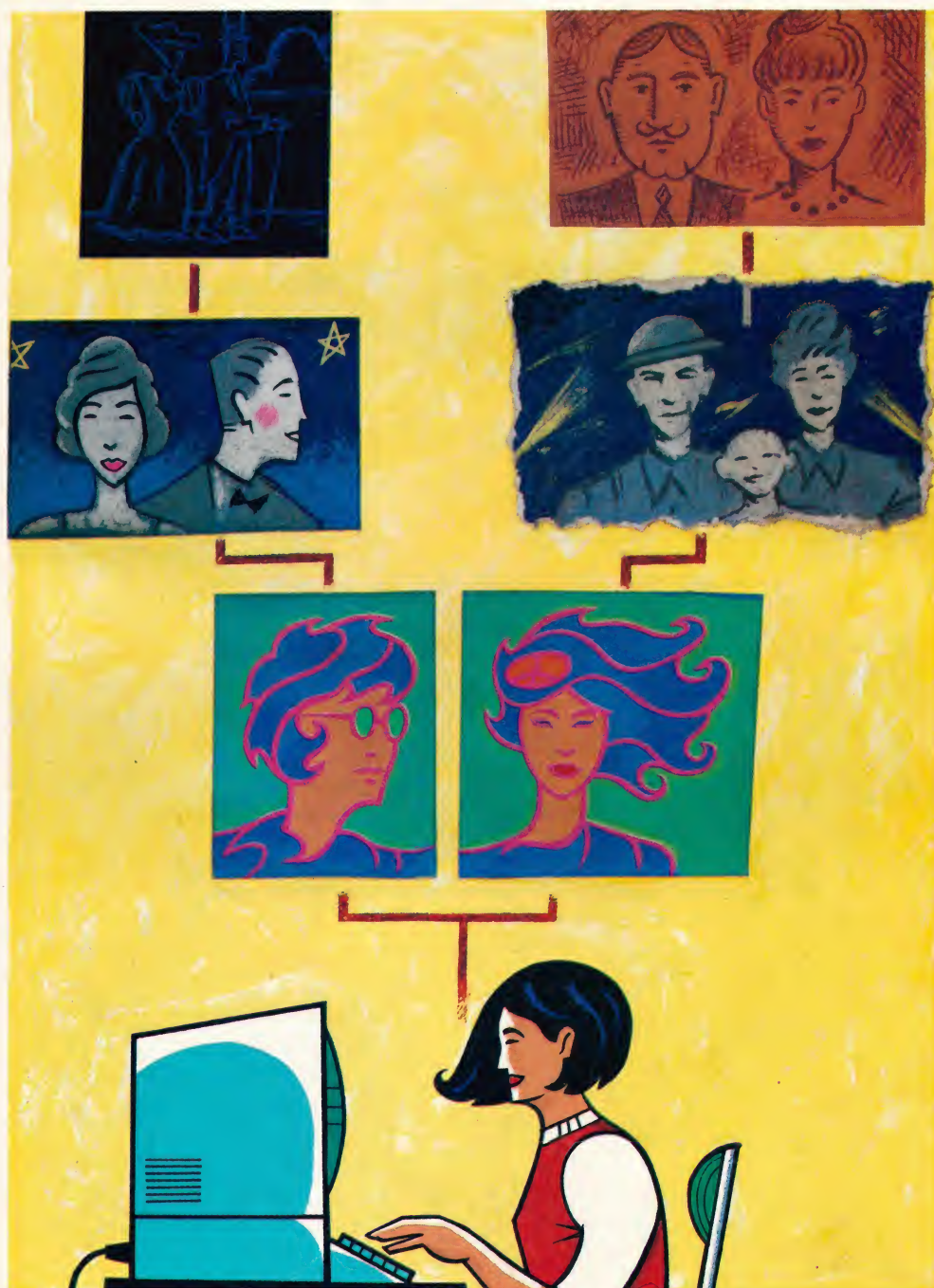
The program needs at least 512K memory, although if you intend entering over 2,000 names, you will need a full 640K. This allows you to enter up to 15,000 names, which should be more than enough for anyone.

For each individual you can include date and location of birth, death, and up to three other events, together with two additional fields of your own choosing. Each person can have up to seven message lines of additional data attached, or a separate text file of unlimited size. Message lines can be tagged for printing or for display only: there is a limited 24-line text editor for creating the text files.

There are eight different options on date format, including three that allow European DD-MM-YY entry. Dates can be qualified with 'about', 'circa', 'before' or 'after'.

Details are also entered on this screen for wife and kids, and each person can have up to eight marriages stored (so even Elizabeth Taylor is covered). Each marriage record can hold the marriage date and place, one additional date and place, and the names of up to 24 children. After entering a name the program can be asked to automatically check for duplicate or even similar entries.

It is all pretty easy to use, although the function keys can be a bit confusing - F1 seems to act as the ESC key, for example. However there are some nice short cut touches such as a 'ditto' key, for example, which automatically duplicates the contents of another field. You can even define 'macro' keys to automatically insert short strings of text. The only problem encountered was minor but disconcerting display



corruption on some of the screens.

As far as printing goes, the program caters for either dot matrix printers compatible with the IBM graphic character set, or the Hewlett Packard LaserJet. The program manages a respectable sideways printout on IBM-compatible printers, which is quite important given the width of some of the charts, while all output can be to screen, disk or printer.

Quite a range of print-outs are available, including an individual's Ancestor chart, covering up to five generations at a time, or a Descendants chart showing up to 20 generations. A Group Sheet provides details on an individual's immediate family, with a wide range of options, while the Tree chart prints up to 10 generations at a time with connecting lines.

The program can also print out a birthday list of just those people still alive, and

will attempt to extrapolate married names for wives listed by maiden name. You can also print out a list based on the standard Ahnentafel numbering system (from a German word meaning 'ancestor table'), or even design your own report format.

Brother's Keeper has its own file format, which actually isn't that efficient - although it is easy to understand. There is a separate conversion program for the GEDCOM file format, and it can also create a 'Tiny Tafel' file - a summary file that can be used to find other people checking up on the same family lines as you. Some bulletin boards support the Tafel Matching System.

FACT BOX

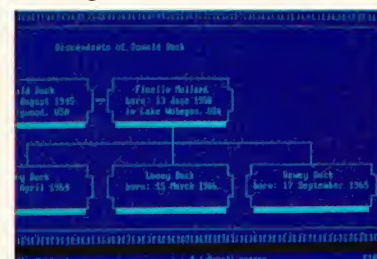
Product: Brother's Keeper v4.5b
Supplied by: Public Domain Software Library
Call: (0892) 663298
Price: £40 registration fee.
Verdict: Powerful, but not always easy to use.

FAMILY TREE MAKER

By contrast, this is a commercial program which comes with one of the nicest manuals I have seen for a long time, clearly written with plenty of screenshots and even photos of the authors' own ancestors. There is a useful appendix on research techniques too, although the sources given are all American, as this is an American program, written by Banner Blue Software Incorporated.

The program runs in 384K of memory and arrived on a 3.5-inch disk. This caused minor installation problems simply because my 3.5-inch drive is drive B, and the program assumes the master disk is in drive A. Installation is actually simply a matter of copying the files over, but this sort of thing could cause a beginner problems.

Installation also involves selecting a printer driver: a wide range are available, including Hewlett Packard DeskJet,



LaserJet and plotters. Here you select paper, choosing from 8.5 x 11", 8.5 x 14", 14 x 11", A4 or B5 sizes - on a suitable plotter it can even manage full A1 or D-size drawings. Finally you can select for LDS format reports, in which case additional information unique to the Mormon requirements will be requested, such as a 'sealing date' for marriages and special temple codes.

With *Family Tree Maker* the main entry point is the Family Card. Here details of the date and location of birth and death are entered for husband and wife, together with marriage details and children's names, sex and date of birth. Dates can be entered as 'after', 'before', 'circa', 'est' and 'about', although the last three are all stored as 'about'.

From the Family Card you can move to the Individual Cards. These cover three screens each, starting with a screen for dates and place of birth, death and up to five other 'events'. The field names can be changed to any seven letter label, so could be set to 'school' if you wanted to record when people started at school, for example. Next comes a card for a limited amount of biographical information, followed by a physical and medical information card. Again, many of the field names can be changed.

You can also call up a card for storing details of source material for birth, death and two of the 'events' for any individual. Keeping track of source material is an important part of genealogy, as you often come across conflicting information and

need to cross reference.

The operations of the function keys are all shown on-screen, which makes the program rather easier to use, and most of the keys work as you would expect. You can move through the tree simply by asking for the family cards of parents or children, or you can summon up a list of all the names entered from which you can go straight to the required information. Unfortunately there appears to be no short-cut keys for duplicating names or locations.

Data is stored in Family Tree Maker's own file format which, though compact, is not ASCII, which could cause problems if it got corrupted. The program does not appear to support the GEDCOM format at all.

You can print ancestor trees, descendant trees or 'photo' trees, which include spaces for family snapshots. You can select for a connecting line to be dotted, rather than full, which is useful where you are not certain about a connection. There are various styles of borders and boxes to choose from, and you can add titles and notes. As the manual says: "printing beautiful family trees is what Family Tree Maker is all about."

Although there are no separate display facilities, you can preview the page on screen before printing, which comes to the same thing. And the results are good, even on an ordinary nine-pin dot matrix, with very effective management of sideways printing for those wider trees.

You can also print lists of individuals, or a complete 'Family Group Sheet', and the program will generate Ahnentafel numbers if you require. Individual Ancestor trees can only cover up to 10 generations at a time, while descendant trees can cover up to 99 generations. There seems to be a limit of around 5,500 records in total.

Although not as powerful as Brother's Keeper, the impression is of a well written and easy to use program

FACT BOX

Product: Family Tree Maker
Supplied by: Software Circus
Call: (071) 436 2811
Price: £44.95
Verdict: Easy to use with very pretty printouts.

TREES

This is also a commercial program, but this time written by an English company. It comes on both 5.25 and 3.5-inch disks but with a very clumsily written and poorly presented manual, and these initial impressions are not helped by the hideous red and green colour scheme used on some screens. Thankfully this can be changed, and the program does have quite a few redeeming features.

With *Trees* there is no family card.



Instead you enter either individual details or marriage details, with the individual details includes space for the names of the father and mother. The individual's card asks for date and location of birth, naming, burial and death, although these can

KISSING COUSINS

Family trees, with their interlocking relationships of blood and marriage, are surprisingly complex data structures, so it's perhaps not surprising to find they occasionally get unstuck, particularly over problems such as those presented by cousins marrying.

At its widest, this problem occurs whenever it is discovered that one of your relatives, however distant, has married someone who is already in the tree - a distant cousin, in other words. The problem is that, somewhere along the line, the ancestors of both partners will be one and the same. Looked at from another point of view, it means that any offspring of the marriage can trace their heritage through the tree along two different routes.

None of the programs reviewed here cope with this problem in a truly satisfactory manner, although at least *Trees* recognises that the problem does exist. Family Tree Maker copes by simply not allowing you to link by marriage to anyone already on the tree. The only solution here is to create a new individual for the marriage partner and make a note on the Individual Card that this is actually the same person as someone else, perhaps by Reference Number.

The other two programs do allow you to link by marriage to someone already on the tree, but when a chart is printed showing the ancestors of the offspring, those common to both father and mother show up twice - once on the father's side and once on the mother's. Conversely, a chart of descendants will show the same offspring twice, and indeed in our test Brother's Keeper identified the father as a 'first cousin, once removed'. Again, the only solution is to treat the partner as a new individual and simply note the connection.

be left blank. Dates can be 'after', 'before' or 'circa', but only in YY-MM-DD format. All information is stored in capital letters, although the program will differentiate 'Mc' or 'Mac' in a surname.

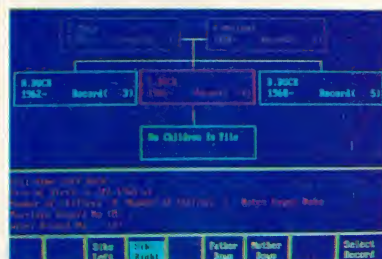
Trees basically works by record number, although pressing a function key does call up a list of the names entered so far from which you can select on a 'point and shoot' basis. There is quite a good search facility too, including a 'soundex' search which will pull out any names that sound similar but are spelled differently.

The fields on the individual and marriage screens are fixed, but you can attach up to 10 pages of notes to individual details, although each page only contains five lines of 50 characters each. The search facility works on notes too.

The opening screen is a fairly conventional pop-down menu system, although overall the program is rather idiosyncratic. Nevertheless you get used to it after a while. More worrying was a tendency to generate cryptic error messages and bomb out if asked to search for records that don't exist.

Printing is quite limited: the program only supports Epson compatible 9 or 24-pin printers. The 'dropline' chart, printed sideways, is the most useful but nothing like as decorative or flexible as the output of Family Tree Maker. The Family Group Form is very similar to that of the LDS.

The display facilities are rather better, with the ability to view the tree either 'globally', with up to six generations of 24 people each shown as linked boxes, or



'detailed' in which case you get a close-up of just one family. In either case, it's relatively easy to zoom in on a particular relative, or move around at will.

The program requires 512K memory to run, with file size initially restricted to about 10 individuals. This can be expanded to take up whatever room you have on the data disk, to a maximum of 9,999 individuals. As it stands the program doesn't support the GEDCOM file format, although this should be incorporated in the near future.

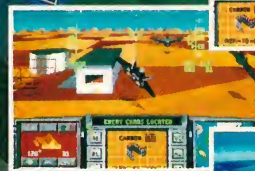
FACT BOX

Product: *Trees*
Supplied by: Tomorrow's Designs Ltd.
Call: (0983) 67890
Price: £32.00
Verdict: Some nice features but not as pretty on paper.

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SIGN UP AND SEE THE WORLD

There are four games in the mammoth Carmen series in which you pursue an arch villainess through Europe, the USA, the World, and through the fabric of Time itself (that's history, not the Dave Clark musical - it wouldn't necessarily be much fun dodging those huge holograms and occasionally bumping into Cliff or David Cassidy).

Given the games' scope, I 'm going to concentrate on *Where In The World Is... Carmen Sandiego* to give you a flavour of the gameplay and then briefly talk about the others' special features. Last, you'll also find details of an exciting new Broderbund project that PC Leisure has squeezed exclusively from its British distributor, Domark.

So *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego*?

Before we get into that I've got a few questions of my own. Where do Carmen's gang get their money from? How do they cope with the massive jet lag that must be a constant threat to their social lives? Is it drugs, the copra crop they keep stealing, or the beauty of the Mona Lisa that probably adorns the wall of a dark cavern somewhere beneath the concrete Christ in Rio? Maybe it's just an endless, overwhelming desire to please the Broderbund Board, the Domark Dame, that Madame of mayhem - Carmen Sandiego herself.

CRIME DOES PAY

If the tussles I've had with Carmen and her criminal colleagues have proved anything, they've proved that crime *does* pay. While I sit here in this same room, miserably trying to earn a crust from the curmudgeon who calls himself an editor, she effortlessly eludes me from Baghdad to Bangkok, Sydney to Sheffield, Montreal to... well, to some other place that begins with 'M'.

It's not even as if she's that clever. She's a souped-up CGA graphic (apart from the

Aspiring sleuth Rob Beattie casts his magnifying glass over Broderbund's top-selling Carmen Sandiego series to see if leisure and learning really can combine.

Deluxe edition - see box-out) that ought to be no match for a fully-equipped, World Almanac toting, industrial strength PC Leisure king-hell reviewer. But she is - and unless you keep your wits about you, I guarantee she'll elude you too.

Some background. Americans are the most insular race in the world. Despite their lemming-like trips round Europe, the Far East and the world, the majority of them are actually not very interested in anything that goes on in foreign parts at all. Rather, they associate 'abroad' with disaster (Vietnam, Korea, Iran, the Gulf, the World Cup and so on). So it's not surprising that surveys of US citizens tend to reveal a massive ignorance when it comes

using the supplied 950-page plus *World Almanac* and *Book Of Facts*. And if what you want ain't in there, it ain't any use to you.

The interface is simple enough - there are two windows and a small bar of four control buttons along the bottom of the screen. You can use the keyboard, a joystick or a mouse. The left window sets the scene, the right one describes it. Thus: "More than 18 million people live in the metropolitan area of Mexico City, the largest city of Mexico. One of Mexico's most famous mountains is Popocatepetl." If you're expecting social comment - Mexico's huge foreign debt, her grinding poverty - you're in the wrong game, we're after master criminals here.

Once the scene is established, you get the chance to go to any of three locations where you'll be given a clue - some are fairly cryptic, some are blindingly obvious. The game uses flags of the world a lot to determine where you should try next as you pursue Carmen's heartless gang - fancy stealing the Abominable Snowman...

Sprinkled throughout the game are other clues as well - a physical description of the suspect which is vital if you're to obtain an arrest warrant: then there are details of their hobbies, their modes of transport, their favourite foods and so on. Keep a sharp eye on this and all the other clues or else you'll get hopelessly lost. Many's the hour I spent wandering gloomily around Reykjavik while Carmen sunned herself in Rio.

HERE'S HOW A TYPICAL GAME RUNS

The teletype chatters out my next assignment: "National treasure stolen from Baghdad. The treasure has been identified as a flying carpet." Frankly, in these troubled times, who gives a toss what's been stolen from Baghdad - maybe I should

Game Options Home Dossiers



This information may be interesting, but hurry up - you have a thief to catch

to geography - even their own geography. Something daft like 67 per cent of them think that Mexico is in mainland Europe. That's where the Carmen Sandiego series comes in. It's educational and it's designed to improve your (and your kids') understanding of world geography, nature, basic economic and social studies - oh, and there's a little bit of history as well.

The basic idea is simple. You pursue the light-fingered lady and her crew across the globe, following the clues scattered behind by the laughably careless bunch, and



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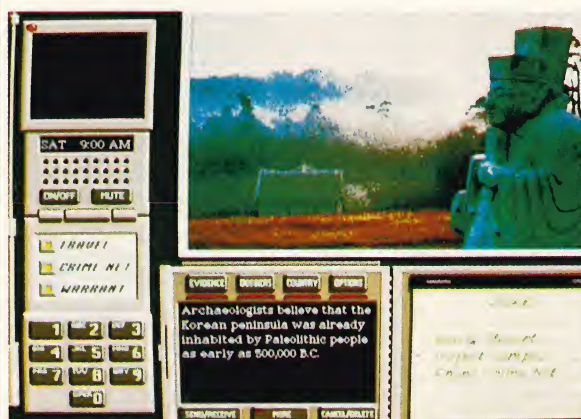
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More world trivia, courtesy of Broderbund.



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WHERE IN THE USA...

Funnier and more complicated. Armed with Fodor's 900-page guide to the USA (a special Broderbund edition which means it's four years old) and the same interface as *Where In The World*, you stomp around mainland United States from Annapolis to Seattle, Miami to Chicago, and by the time I get to Phoenix I still probably won't be able to find her. It's a shame about the book being out of date, because this has the advantage of being set in a truly alien land, and is consequently more attractive.

WHERE IN EUROPE...

Uh oh, no mouse support. This is the earliest of the series and it shows. The graphics are CGA only, and aren't helped by the basic animation. This is obviously a great idea in its infancy, without any of the sophistication that makes the later ones so enjoyable. It's a good introduction to the way the system works, but the later versions are far more enjoyable.

The digitised beauty of *The Deluxe Edition*...

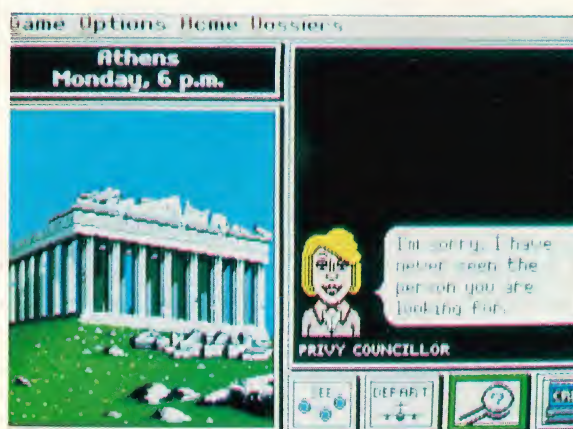
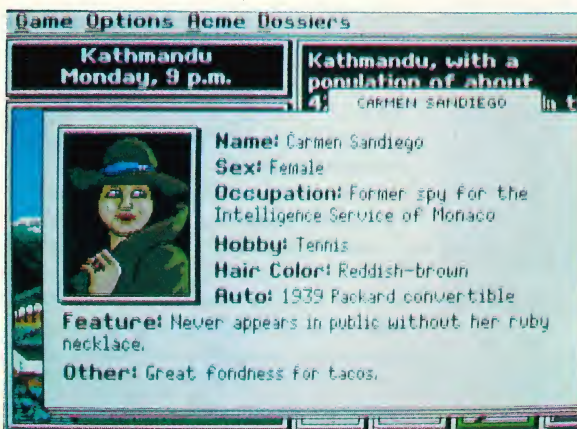
WHERE IN TIME...

1990: here, you're a Time Cadet, instead of a rookie, sleuth or investigator, and you're armed with a Chronoskimmer which allows you to travel back down the ages, and a 1,300 page *New American Desk Encyclopedia*. Overall, considerably noisier than the others, featuring peculiar, unrealistic warp and time travel FX, an insecure capture robot, and a set of fairly obvious clues. The *Encyclopedia* makes this game easier to solve than the others since all the entries are alphabetical, and often, the program itself dictates where in time you're travelling rather than making you choose. Having returned the first mercury mine to the grateful citizens of Peru circa 1550 (who probably didn't even know what it was) I retire.

NOTICE BOARD

Product: *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?*
Supplied by: Broderbund/Domark
Call: (081) 780 2222
Price: £34.99
Verdict: Fun and learning in one slick package.
Note: Details are the same for all games except *Where In Europe...* which does not support a mouse, and the *Deluxe* version which needs at least 10Mb of hard disk space for all those pictures.

...one step ahead of *Where In Time...* and *Where In Europe...* (right and left respectively).



THE DELUXE EDITION

This one isn't available in the UK yet, but it's worth reporting on just in case. I thought this was something of a waste of time at first, but it really is the difference between *Basildon Bond* and the back of an envelope - at least in terms of packaging.

The *Deluxe Edition* digitises the locations to give you photo-real backgrounds for your case. Here you fly *Indiana Jones* style across a map of the world - red line moving from A to B, with different kinds of planes in the foreground.

It's also considerably more difficult to get an arrest in the *Deluxe Edition*, and long after the time it had taken me to master the vanilla *Where In The World*, I was still struggling to make my first collar in the more rarified atmosphere of *Deluxe*. This is partly because the clues are considerably more obscure than before, and partly because the complexity of the interface actually ends up getting in the way of the game, rather than adding to the richness and beauty of Carmen's world.

After a while, even the digitised images start to pall - the quality is very inconsistent - and I found myself thinking back wistfully to my 11 collars in a single afternoon in the ordinary game. Instead of the daft bandit and *Keystone Cops* graphics you get in the vanilla version, *Deluxe* gives you a much greater range of characters who pop up over the backgrounds to perform 'funny' routines. When they're

caught, however, the result is just as predictable.

Last and most depressing, the UK entry goes like this: "In the 19th century, the United Kingdom was the greatest industrial and trading nation in the world with an empire that stretched round the globe." Still, we've always got the Falkland Islands to fall back on I suppose.

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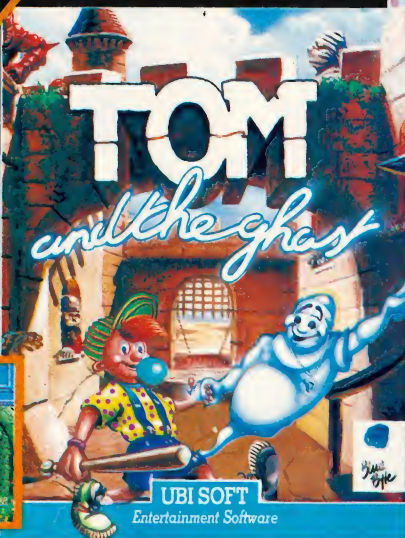
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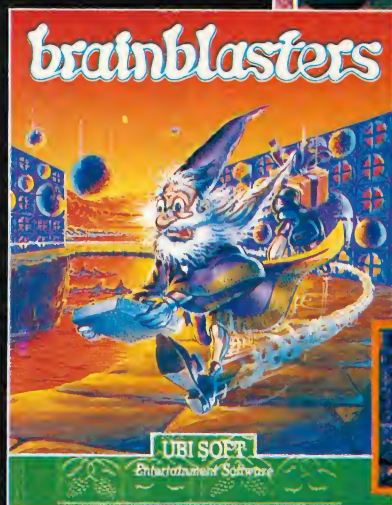


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FULL METAL STRATEGY



Putney-based publisher Domark is set to enter the world of real-life simulation with *'Nam*, a strategy game based on the events of the Vietnam war from both a military and political standpoint. Despite the publisher's track record in producing arcade-style games - most notably the Tengen coin-op conversions and the James Bond games - *'Nam* promises to be something very different indeed.

'Nam has been designed and developed by Matthew Stibbe, who, together with Nick Wilson, wrote *Imperium* for Electronic Arts. Matthew refers to *'Nam* as a 'historical laboratory' - you or I would

probably call it a strategic simulation.

The player takes on the role of the US president, fighting an economic battle at home, and trying to keep morale and support for US policy in Vietnam high enough to win the next election. This position also allows the player to act as the forces' Commander in Chief, controlling military operations. Could you do better than Nixon? Could Lyndon Johnson's policies have led to a more peaceful outcome? Was the war 'winnable' for either the Americans or the Viet Cong? These historical 'what-ifs' can now all be put to the test.

Matthew Stibbe is well-qualified to take

Christina Erskine takes a pre-release look at a new wargame which puts the strategies of the Vietnam conflict before the body count.

on the role of designing *'Nam*. He's currently studying Modern History at Pembroke College, Oxford. A former wargaming fanatic, he has taken a deep interest in the war in Vietnam for around five years - an obsession which he reckons he may have got out of his system by developing *'Nam*.

BOARD-BASED

'Nam was originally a board game, which Matthew designed during his 'year out' between school and university. At this time, he was also working on *Imperium*. When that project finished, he turned his attention to rewriting *'Nam* as a computer



game.

'Nam has a *Hypercard* style user interface. Rather than going for a fully-blown windowing environment, as in *Imperium*, or scrolling through reams of listed options, you click on button icons or key-words to bring up further options. If you have EGA or VGA graphics, you'll find the contoured and shaded maps and illustrated screens of your presidential office particularly effective. If you have a CGA card, you'll find 'Nam a change from the usual cyan and purple graphic combination. In the interests of achieving higher resolution, and thus greater detail, Matthew has opted for 640 x 200 mono graphics in CGA mode for a Macintosh-like look. Hercules and Tandy graphics are also catered for. Unfortunately, although a specific VGA option was planned at one point, memory restrictions led to it being shelved.

NIXON OR JOHNSON?

In your role as US president, you can choose to play as Richard Nixon building up support for his US presidential bid (successful in 1968) in which case you'll begin the game deeply unpopular and with some ground troops already out in Vietnam, or Lyndon Johnson (president from 1964-68) with no ground troops

Programmer Matthew Stibbe tests the Oval office chair for size.

immediately available, balancing the needs of the military with the pressure from home. For example, as in real life, you have to strike a careful balance between keeping the army in Vietnam supplied, both with equipment and in terms of manpower, and not destroying morale by sending too many troops to get killed - a surefire election loser.

The user interface means you can move to any part of the game you please at each stage rather than laboriously running through the same set of options at every 'move'. You can check up on your score, or your media image by scanning through the screens of newspapers of the day, or call up your team of advisors for their views on how to proceed next. Some

advisors are more concerned with your military progress, others with your PR profile, so you will almost certainly get conflicting reports.

While your popularity and the level of morale amongst the American public are important factors in the game (the Vietnam conflict itself was waged not to gain territory, but to win the 'hearts and minds' of the Vietnamese against the Communist Viet Cong) determining levels of economic aid, military strategy and controlling troop movement form the core of the simulation. It is here that you give orders for troop movement, allocate helicopters to units and so on.

'Nam can be played on a number of different levels. On the one hand, you could view it as a simple war game, and take on separate campaigns - the siege of Khe Sanh, or the Tet Offensive, for example. Here, you'll find the troops and tactics ini-

tially deployed exactly as they were at the time: you can then test your military strategy against the events of the day - within certain limits. You can't for example, suddenly decide on full American conscription to increase your manpower.

AUTHENTICITY

What is impressive about 'Nam is the sheer weight of detail and air of authenticity. Every division, every battalion that was deployed in the conflict is available to you. You don't have to deploy them yourself: indeed you could play 'Nam as a political exercise and not send in any troops at all, but simply flood South Vietnam with economic aid (and see where that gets you!).

The maps which you can (and will) refer to constantly throughout the game are reproductions of the actual maps used by the American forces. From an overall map of South-East Asia, you can zoom in to examine your troop movement in detail in large scale representations of towns relevant to the conflict.

Progress in the game is relayed by 'presidential reports' appearing on-screen, but are backed up by mock-ups of newspaper articles, and access to screenfuls of detail about troops, equipment and supplies available. 'Winning' isn't just a question of numbers of dead - your losses against the



South-East Asia waits in glorious technicolour (right) while the president receives advice from his staff (below).



Vietnamese losses - but your presidential popularity, electoral success, soldiers' overall morale, etc.

To achieve an American victory, you need to wear the North Vietnamese down over a period of time rather than going out for wholesale slaughter, although Matthew says it is possible to take the 'Rambo' option and win through victories in battle alone, this is made very difficult.

'Nam is currently being debugged and is due for release in January, from Domark, at a price yet to be finalised (but which will probably turn out to be £34.99). Meanwhile, Matthew Stibbe reckons that it's time he concentrated on his degree course, with his finals coming up next June, but he already has a design underway for a game with the provisional title of *King Of Wall Street*.

Watch out for a full review of 'Nam next issue.

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A PLACE ON THE BOARD ANYONE?

mraditional board games have the nostalgic air of Hovis ads. From *Monopoly* to *Cluedo* to *Happy Families* (a misnomer if ever there was one), they evoke the smell of oxtail soup and sitting on lumpy cushions round the kitchen table. And by the way, wasn't one of the *Cluedo* weapons always missing? Our set usually featured a nail for the lead piping and a spanner that covered three quarters of the board.

That wasn't the only problem by any means though. Remember trudging through the house, desperately trying to find someone who would play *Monopoly* with you for the seventh wet day running, only to be told it wasn't much of a game for two people? Well nowadays, you don't need to go through any of this: now you can play against the computer.

Computer board games have been around for some years: Virgin signed up with various manufacturers some time ago to produce computer versions of *Monopoly*, *Cluedo* and *Scrabble*. While the early versions of these now look a touch prehistoric, modern graphics capabilities have enhanced the atmosphere of playing this type of licensed game immeasurably.

Even more traditional pastimes, such as *Backgammon*, *Draughts* and card games have also been popular, to the extent that Sierra has recently brought out two packages devoted to card games, the second of which, *Hoyle's Book of Games II*, features only Patience (Solitaire) games. This seems a little odd, I mean, what sort of a household is it that can run to a PC but not a pack of cards? Or are buyers just too lazy to shuffle the pack after each game?

The other factor which has improved vastly of late is speed. *Backgammon*, for instance, is a quick-fire game, where, in the early stages at least, many of your moves are more or less intuitive. If you have to enter laborious co-ordinates to

Computers have always played Chess, but did you know that they've run *Monopoly* for almost as long? Christina Erskine looks into the world of the computerised board game.

move your pieces, or worse, wait for a screen message saying something quite superfluous such as "Player 1, you have thrown a six and a four. What is your move?", the game quickly loses its appeal. With a fast PC and mouse control, you can play a much more natural game.

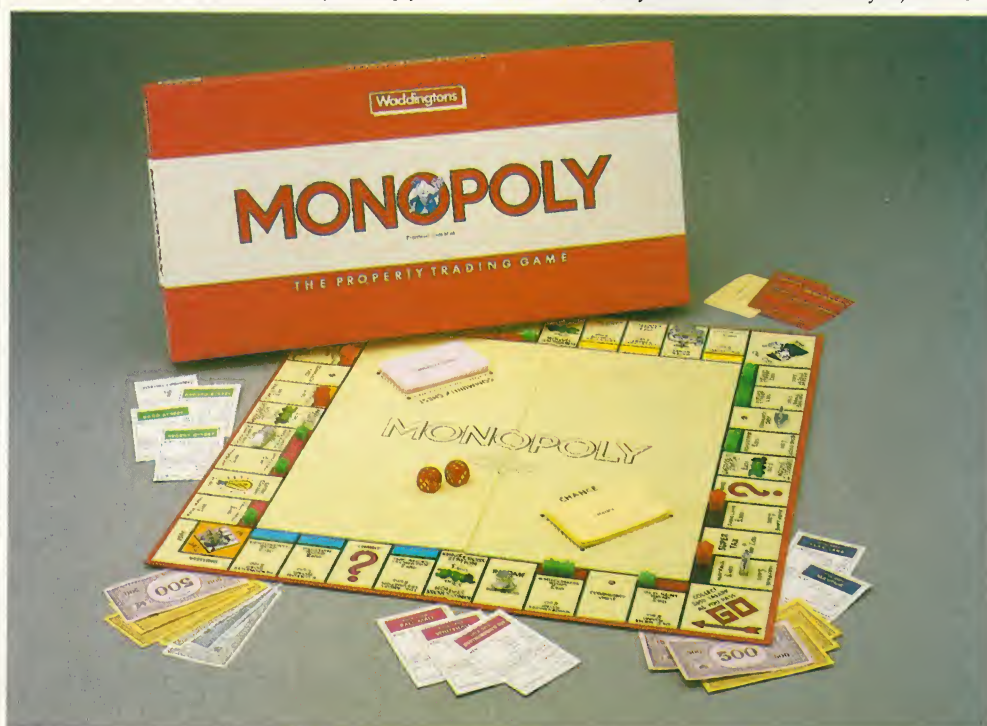
WHY THE COMPUTER?

There are probably three main reasons for splashing out on an often more expensive computer equivalent of a board game. One is to play during an office coffee break (make sure there's a single keypress exit command though), secondly you can improve your technique (being consistently thrashed at *Draughts* by seven-year-olds is a pretty humiliating experience) and the third is that you simply can't find other

people to play often enough (a problem well known to *Bridge* addicts).

Nor are computer opponents necessarily push-overs. Obviously, they don't have that element of flair or unpredictability that human players do, and nor does their game fluctuate (they don't usually learn from poor play, or 'forget' what you told them about the dining room and the candlestick), but a general rule of thumb is that the newer the game, the better the programming algorithms to make computer players play more as competent humans.

Finally, there are adaptations around these days which attempt to give you value over and above what you would get from playing with human opponents, usually in the form of score analysis, so that





you can brush up on your weak points and play to your strengths.

One of the most polished and sophisticated of the board game packages around is Software Toolworks' *Games People Play* compilation, which features *Cribbage*, *Backgammon*, *'Checkers'* (Draughts to you and I) and *Gin Rummy*. Each game boasts 16-colour EGA graphics, and fast mouse control as an alternative to the keyboard.

One of the program's most attractive options is that you can set the computer player's skill level to suit your own (thus giving you a chance to win more often!) either, in *Gin Rummy* and *Cribbage*, by choosing to play against different computer 'personalities' of various levels of skill, or in *Backgammon* and *Checkers*, by setting the computer's skill level anywhere between 'novice' and 'expert'.

FURIOUS

The *Backgammon* module can be set to play a fast and furious game, and the computer knows all about settling down to play a back game, and how to suggest a nice adrenalin-raising double just as things begin to look dodgy. *Checkers* is similarly snappy, with an attractive optional 3D board view.

In *Gin Rummy* and *Cribbage*, the accompanying manuals give a detailed description of each distinct computer opponent and what playing algorithms have been programmed in, so that you can choose a computer player to match your own strengths. You can also ask the computer to keep a running total of all the games you play and offer analysis of the results. For *Gin Rummy*, this is a straight running total of points, but the *Cribbage* analysis goes into considerable depth, comparing your performance in both the card play and hand-counting stages of the game against that of your opponent.

Gin Rummy gives you the option to play either straight *Gin* or *Oklahoma* rules, in which the value of the first card turned face up from the heap determines how many points you need to 'knock'.

Somebody at Software Toolworks is obviously a *Cribbage* fiend, since apart from the detailed analysis feature, *Cribbage* gets a disproportionate amount of coverage in the accompanying manuals, with graphs showing which cards are best to discard into your crib, the opponent's crib, and some guidance over discarding for pegging as opposed to discarding for high-score hands. It takes it all very seriously, and the two most skilled computer opponents also play a mean game.

There are a wealth of trivia quiz-style games on the market, most of which are pretty mediocre, but the best is the officially licensed version of *Trivial Pursuit* from Domark, which uses the computer's graphics and sound to good effect with diagrammatic, illustrated and musical questions. However, the PC version probably isn't the best, with blocky CGA graphics, and it's not compatible with any of the sound boards, so you can't escape the internal squeaker's renditions of tunes, which handicaps things somewhat.

The programmer, Oxford Digital Enterprises, has added a chunky character called TP, who acts as MC and question master. He's endearing for a while, but once you've got used to the sight of him strutting across your screen to wheel out the next question, he can, thankfully, be switched off, which speeds the game up considerably.

In *Trivial Pursuit*, you can play with other human opponents, or by yourself to

Cluedo and (below left) *Monopoly*, both of which have made a successful transition from board to screen.



TP does his thing in Domark's *Trivial Pursuit*.

test your trivia knowledge. An addition to the original board game is a statistics section: the computer will keep count of how many questions you answer correctly overall, and questions answered correctly per subject, which is useful for the other players when you've won all your wedges and have reached the centre square. A certain amount of honesty and fair play is called for, since rather than typing in your answers, you tell the computer whether you got it right or not.

Ancient games from the Orient are fair game for publishers: *Shanghai* and *Mah Jong* are just two which have been computerised recently. The original *Shanghai*, published by Activision, has now been deleted from its catalogue, but *Shanghai II* is due for release next month at £29.99 (see previews), and if it's as hopelessly addictive as its predecessor, it shouldn't be installed on any PC you use for business!

Shanghai itself plays like an approximation of that old card game, *Pelmanism*. Using a 'pack' of 144 *Mah Jong*-like tiles shuffled and dealt in a fixed arrangement of rows and piles, your task is to remove matching pairs of exposed tiles which are 'free', ie, not boxed in by neighbouring rows of equal depth or higher, until, ideally there are no tiles left.

ADDICTION

It may sound like fairly pedestrian stuff, but the addiction factor comes into play when you realise that in each deal, removing the tiles in a different order can enhance your chances of getting out. The game can also be played in tournament mode with other players - you each have a fixed time limit to remove as many tiles as possible from the same layout, a version of the game which has disrupted whole days in several offices I can think of.

Where the original *Shanghai* gave you random deals in the same layout of tiles, *Shanghai II* offers 12 different layout patterns - but again with the tiles shuffled each time - of varying inherent difficulty. There is also a 'masters' module, where you can take on the computer in a one-on-one version of.

Mah Jong is a game using special tiles with rules which will be familiar to anyone who knows *Rummy*-style card games. CDS produced a computer version of this game way back in the mid-eighties, so it's beginning to show its age, particularly with its CGA-only graphics, but is worth a look for anyone interested in the mysteries of *Mah Jong*.

As in *Rummy*, the object is to collect tiles which form sequences in suit (a 'chow'), or are of the same denomination (three of a kind is a 'pung', and four is a 'kong'), and discard those which are of no use to you, but hopefully not of too much use to your opponents either.

That old family favourite, *Cluedo*, is available on computer from Virgin-Mastertronic on its Leisure Genius label. Actually, it's not quite the old family

GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT™

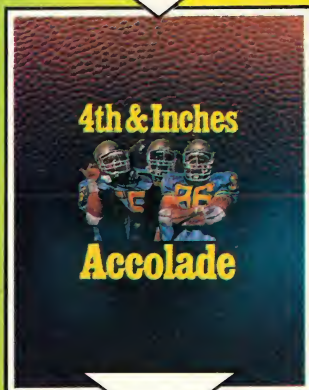
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Leisure Genius' Cluedo - Master Detective.

favourite, it's a computer version of the American deluxe game: *Cluedo - Master Detective* has 10 suspects, eight weapons and 12 rooms. This might have made the computer version simply a longer process of elimination, but to mitigate this, it has refinements such as 'snoop' squares and the ruling that rather than being shown cards from your left only, all players with cards to show you must do so.

Frankly, the PC version of *Cluedo* is messy. The overhead view of the board is cluttered in EGA mode and pretty nasty in CGA: instead of a nice clean architectural plan view of the rooms, the designer has attempted to draw in an approximation of furniture in each, so that if your opponents are moving from room to room it can be difficult to tell if that green blob in the dining room is Mr Green (so when did he get defrocked, anyway?) or a representation of a pot plant.

RISKY BUSINESS

Movement around the board is also a paralysing process if you don't have a compatible mouse. Apart from having to keypress diligently on each square you wish to travel through, the move confirmation icon is at one end of the screen, and the 'yes, I do want to make a suggestion' icon is at the other - and keyboard-activated cursor movement is irritatingly slow. However, with a printer, you can output reams of detective notes, and even

a list of all suggestions made so far - very useful for times when your detective notes have become quite unintelligible.

Virgin also has versions of *Risk* and *Diplomacy* on the market. *Diplomacy* has been around for some time, while *Risk* in EGA mode, offers an attractive screen display. As in *Cluedo*, you can play with any combination of computer and human players, and set the computer players' skill level between 'easy', 'standard' and 'difficult'. Computer *Risk* also offers a two-player option with a 'neutral' computer player, which will occupy territories to act as a buffer between your territories and those of the your opponent, although the neutral won't take any part in the game. *Risk* can also play either UK or US rules.

Diplomacy was extremely well received when it was first released in 1988. Since it will play a combination of computer and humans, it solves the problem of finding enough people to play for real, but the computer players won't enter into extra-curricular negotiations, which means that some of the flavour of the game is lost. As in *Trivial Pursuit*, some honesty is called for by the human players in resisting any temptation to peek as other players type in their orders, then the computer determines which moves have succeeded and shows the current status of the game.

Staying with battlefield strategy is *Stratego* from Accolade. Played on a 10 x 10 squared board, you play against the computer, as each player tries to utilise an army made up of 40-pieces to capture the opponent's flag. Accolade has concentrated on atmospherics in *Stratego*: there is a choice of board designs, playing piece designs, plus suitably militaristic music and battlefield sound effects. You can also choose from five levels of playing difficulty, and create and save your own *Stratego* set-ups.

FACT BOX

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Publisher: CDS

Call: (0302) 321134

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Available: now

GIVE IT SOME STICK

No stranger to wagging sticks, John Minson examines what's currently available for the player who wants to take gaming one step beyond the keyboard.

No serious player would even consider the keyboard as their premium method of game control - how can you achieve fluidity of movement or lightning-fast firing speeds if your fingers are flying from the arrow keys to Enter... or was it Space for that smart bomb?

For precision positioning and split-second reactions you need a joystick. The act of gently making a pixel-accurate manoeuvre or wildly lunging to avoid certain death involves your arm, maybe even the whole upper part of your body.

Therefore, choosing the right stick is important. Mostly because the differences go beyond mere cosmetics: you may find the extra travel of a large grip ideal, or you may prefer the finger-sensitive accuracy of a shorter stick. How much inertia do you like, and do you always want the stick to centre itself or should it offer a free-floating option? Are the fire buttons ergonomically placed and can you swap which is button A and B to suit the game?

You can even find considerable variation in the electronics. While PC joysticks are traditionally analogue in design (meaning that they measure the movement of the stick progressively) you can also obtain digital sticks which use microswitches to provide simple on-off responses in the 'X' and 'Y' axes. Then there are special features such as auto-fire and even slow motion!



STICKY MOMENTS

Our joystick assault course took two parts: firstly there was the theoretical evaluation of quality, rigidity, physical characteristics and the like.

Then came the hard bit: ripping open the PC to shove recalcitrant cards into

TESTING TIMES

The games chosen to put the sticks to the test were *Fiendish Freddy's Big Top O'Fun* and *World Cup Soccer Italia '90*.

The former, Mindscape's madcap arcade game, contains a number of sequences based on a circus theme - we chose two. The first, High Diving, involves that most deadly of joystick activities, the jiggle. In order to put your high diver into a spin you wildly wiggle the stick from side to side, thus testing its resilience (to say nothing of the player's wrist!). Once the diver's ready you have to shift the stick to one of eight positions and hit the fire button immediately to adopt a pose, otherwise he veers off course.

The other Fiendish Freddy episode was the High Wire. Pressing forward on the stick starts the acrobat moving forward. As he leans from side to side you make minute movements in the opposite direction to right him, testing the stick's sensitivity.

Virgin Games' footie simulation calls for smooth stick movements and a fast finger on the fire button as you weave your player through the opposition defence. Fire causes you to switch control to another player, tackle an opposing player, or kick the ball, so responses need to be accurate.

too-tight slots and subjecting the sticks to some furious gameplay to evaluate their reactions. The test programs were chosen carefully to put different aspects of performance to the test (see left).

Where a supplier provided both card and stick the two were tested together, although naturally you should be able to use any stick with any card. However, we discovered one digital stick which required a special card, a digital stick which contained its own conversion circuitry so that it worked with a standard card and even a device to allow you to connect a digital stick to an analogue card. The pros and cons of these are discussed below.

All of the cards included two ports and some were adjustable for processor speed: in theory this should allow you to tune performance to your system.

Most of the sticks contained two fire buttons. However, few were suited to left-hand use - we've noted those that were. Most could be switched between auto-centering and free-floating (useful for games where you want to move a pointer to a particular position and not have to hold the stick there).

CHAMP (Active)

Stick: £19.99

Card: £14.99

Card: packed in a rather anonymous box, marked only 'Game I/O Card', Active's card is a fairly standard Taiwanese model. Its main distinguishing feature is a potentiometer for adjusting it to your PC's processor speed. Full marks for this being accessible when the card is installed (although there were no installation instructions). It performed as standard in tests.



Champ JS-606 stick: a chunky but rounded base with a skinny, tall and slightly curved handle distinguishes the Champ stick. Its ivory body with pale grey buttons and lean contours make it look pleasantly business-like. There are slides for centering the stick above and to the right of the shaft and two fire buttons to its left, plus an extra fire button on top of the handle.

The auto-fire and button change switches are located on the base, which also houses four small suckers.

In action: the handle feels rather too slim to gain a firm grip, making the top button tricky to use. It's also uncomfortable to hand hold and near impossible for left handers. With the test programs, the Freddy dive demonstrated its easy action, but it proved slightly slow to respond to fire. On the tight-rope, the nice spongy action was very good, but again the fire button response seemed sluggish. For Soccer it had a lovely smooth feel and the fire responses were okay. I wasn't keen on the side fire button position though.

COMPETITION PRO (Sonmax)

Stick and Card: £34.95

Card: the Competition Pro is only available with a card for one simple reason - it's actually a digital stick, so the card acts as an analog-digital converter. There are two 9-pin (Atari-type) sockets plus a small button which introduces a small but noticeable delay into stick responses if you find yourself suffering from hair-trigger action. The circuit board contains more components than the standard card, but appears to be well-constructed.



Competition Pro stick: the body is transparent blue with a chrome stick and twin fire buttons at the top, plus triangular, grey buttons to provide temporary rapid-fire. A switch on the side introduces a slow-motion effect.

The short stick, topped by a stubby ball, has a very short travel, marked by the usual 'clickiness' of micro-switches. Though digital control means you don't get analogue's shading of movement, the tactile feedback can be useful in certain arcade games where a softer movement is misleading. However, the short travel made diagonals difficult to obtain accurately and the absence of rubber suckers meant the base slid around a desk surface (although the stick can be held in a largeish hand).

In action: for Freddy's dive the jiggle was

better than expected, but very tiring. The slow motion was hardly noticeable though and the fire buttons were inconvenient. On the high wire the slo-mo was more noticeable, but it seemed not to act on the time limit and appeared to make judging reaction more difficult. On the Soccer pitch the stick had too short a movement for fluid control and the slo-mo proved a mixed blessing as it made tackling easy but for both sides. The action became noticeably jerky too.

A final note: with only one set of fire buttons it's not suitable for use with certain software, although the button's positioning means that it's suitable for use with either hand.

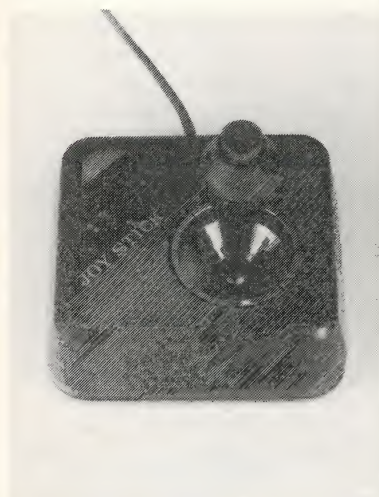
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Card: £15.95

Adaptor: £19.95

Computer Everware card: another anonymous Taiwanese job, but with substantial packaging, including a static-protection bag. Electronically, this appears to be almost identical to Active's Champ card with one important exception - there's no processor speed control.



Joystick 600 stick: this is the first example of a fairly common stick type. The base is small and squarish and is topped by a tiny stick with a top-mounted fire button - this is complemented by a couple of other fire buttons on the top left of the case. Centering wheels and free-float adjusters are on the base. The general appearance is rather plastic: the chrome around the stick will probably wear quite quickly. **In action:** the free-floating adjustment wasn't particularly positive and the absence of suckers meant that the whole thing could slide around during violent movement. Despite this, Freddy's dive proved surprisingly good with a fast with positive action and an easily accessible fire button on top of the diminutive stick. However, on the high wire, the dodgy centering caused problems. The sticky centering action also caused Soccer problems though otherwise the short stick was

The Euromax Joystick 600.

quite mobile.

Suzu PC Game Joystick Adaptor: This ingenious little box allows you to connect a digital joystick to an analogue card. You simply plug one end of the adaptor's cable into the PC socket then plug the stick's nine-pin Atari connector into the box, which contains two small knobs for centering adjustment. A short Basic calibration program is included: this isn't very elegant, but it does work. The hardware seemed to work fine and if you have a penchant for occasionally using a clicky, microswitch stick, this is an ideal way of doing so.

GRAVIS (RC Simulations) £48.30

The impressive, but expensive, Gravis Joystick and (far right) Kraft's KC3.



Stick: the black and red Gravis stick is clearly in a class of its own... just look at that price. It's a lot of money, but this Canadian-made controller is a world away from Korean clones. Superficially similar in design to the Champ (medium sized, slim handle, chunky base), it has a solidity not found in its competitors.

Its red and black finish is informal without looking too toy-store, while the base is solid and heavy enough to stay put despite the absence of suckers. It's also large enough to allow you to rest your right-hand on it, adding further stability. There are two fire buttons on the left, plus one on the stick top, and three thumb-wheel controllers for button swapping and centering adjustment. Though the stick itself is skinny, a rubber grip makes it extremely comfortable. There are even screws on the plug to ensure it doesn't work loose.

In action: on Freddy's Dive the performance was brilliant - my shoulder was liable to give out before the stick. The action is easy, but the responses are positive. Small indents at the four main compass points on the stick-well ensure positive positioning. It's just as pleasing with the high wire because one hand can hold the base while the other really puts weight behind handle. Finally on the Soccer pitch

it offered very fluid movement and felt solid enough to take all the knocks. My only complaint is that the fire buttons aren't ideally placed, especially for left-handers... oh, and that price!

KRAFT (Electronic Zoo)

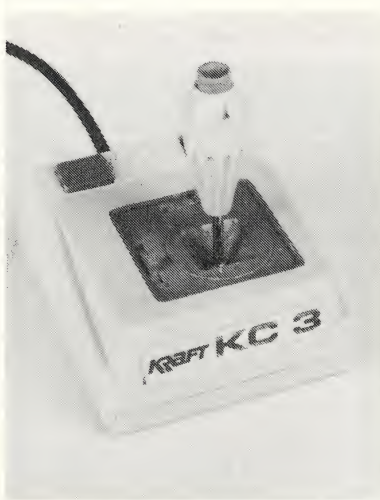
Sticks: KC3 £19.99

Premium 3 £24.99

K130 £27.99

Game Card: £19.99

Card: at last a card with some individuality, both in the electronics (lots of components) and installation. The Kraft comes with software (5.25" only I'm afraid) which not only matches the card speed to your CPU, it also includes a diagnostic which told me that despite running at 12Mhz, my AT would obtain optimum performance with the card set at 14. Once established you can add a line to your Autoexec file to set the speed every time you boot up.



KC3 stick: the KC3 belongs to the short, square joystick genus, but appears more solid than some and its fire buttons are on the top rather than the side (plus an additional one on top stick). The ivory and grey case is reasonably subdued and won't take up much desk space. The trim-controllers are by the stick-well, leaving the base clear for the free-float adjuster and four small, but effective, rubber feet. The manual includes a very short Basic program for centering adjustment which works extremely well. There's no fire button allocation though.

In action: the centering trims were too easy to knock during the frantic jiggling of Freddy's dive, otherwise it was fast to move and respond. On the high wire, the flat edge on the stick well allowed easy control, but the stick is a little short for hair's breadth control. Similarly with Soccer, the action was easy but too short for really instinctive moves. The plug has screws (good) but the auto-centering switches didn't entirely free the stick when off.

Premium III stick: this other chunky

stick with its 'Yorkie' base is slightly less subdued in appearance with black and red trim. It also hides its second fire button away on the back, as well as offering body and stick top buttons. Underneath are more positive switches than the KC3's for centering.

In action: the Freddy dive proved fast and easy with an accurate response to fire. The strong spring return gave a clicky feeling at extremes, although movement was still nicely balanced. Up on the High Wire, control was okay once I was accustomed to the short and extremely skinny stick. For Soccer it was not quite sensitive enough with its short travel. Although the construction seemed solid I preferred the slightly cheaper KC3.



The Kraft Premium III.



KI30 stick: once again Kraft's packaging and peripherals promise more than just another badged clone. This time there's software (5.25" again) for diagnostics and centering. Interestingly the speed test wanted me to set the card for even higher than 14Mhz. The centering program is excellent.

The stick's appearance is very stylish. Essentially ivory and grey with two mounted fire buttons on either side of the top rear of the case plus another button tucked away towards the bottom of the rear side. This may seem an odd position but it is conveniently accessible - for right handers at least. The ergonomics of giving the base a centimetre overhang are less sensible; it rocks around too easily. That said, the top surface with its gentle slope is large enough to rest your hand on when moving the short, rather anorexic stick - with its top-mounted fire button. There are free-float switches on the base: as with the KC3 there still seemed to be a little springiness.

In action: it performed well with all of the test games. Freddy's dive demonstrated fast and easy movement in the wiggle, with positive fire button response. On the high wire it was very smooth and easy to control the acrobat with my hand resting on the base. Soccer again revealed nice steering and button response, but during frantic tackles the base rocked around. My one real complaint? Why no switching to swap buttons?

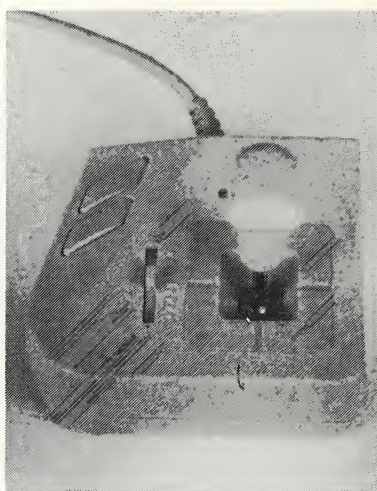
POWERPLAY

Stick: £19.99

Card: £24.99

Combined £35.99

Card: the standard Taiwanese card crops up again, only this time without speed adjustment.



Powerplay's 'Fantastic Controller For computer' and (above right) the Quickjoy.

Stick: here's another variation on the small, squat clone, complete with dodgily printed box bearing the slogan, 'Fantastic Controller For Computer' - it probably sounded better before translation.

The stick design is extremely small and fairly neat, trimming off the top left corner of the cube and adding a couple of diagonally slanting fire buttons. It's suitable for hand holding, but hard feet mean it slides around desk tops. It wouldn't look obtrusive in a business setting, but there's something rather cheap about the ivory plastic. The metal handle is at least topped with a more substantial grip though. The centering sliders are rather vulnerably placed on either side of the stick-well and there's no free-floating option.

In action: very light action meant Freddy's dive had a very fast jiggle, but the fire buttons are extremely indecisive. However, it was good on the high wire, with a flat edge to the well providing a base for the stick and compensating for its short travel. For Soccer the action was too easy though, and again the fire buttons were irritatingly spongy.

QUICKJOY (Spectravideo)

M5 stick: £17.95

Stick: this is one of the two biggest tested.



With its *Star Wars* design, red buttons and switches - and even LED fire indicators - it's not the sort of thing to sit next to your PC when important clients come to call! That said, four stickers keep it firmly anchored and the ergonomics of the big grip and its fire buttons (one on the front, one on the rear) is sensible.

Shifting the stick gives a surprising succession of clicks. Surprising, that is, until you realise that this is a digital stick with on-board analogue conversion electronics. That's useful if you want microswitches and their characteristic response - if not, be warned. The single sheet of instructions warns you not to use Fast or Turbo mode with ATs (presumably this means anything above a bog-standard 4.77MHz - yawn!). There's also a Basic program for centering which is all determined with one controller.

The main controls are built into the stick's swollen head and include optional, variable rate, auto-fire on each trigger plus button swapping. Naturally there's no free float though. The fire LEDs are primarily cosmetic.

In action: for Freddy's dive, the big handle allowed speedy jiggling, but the rattly microswitches were slightly off-putting. The switchable triggers were nicely placed though. On the high wire the stick travelled too far for any sensitivity: the digital circuitry can't have helped. In Soccer the big grip came into its own though with lots of fast, if not wholly accurate swerving.

QUICKSHOT (Bondwell UK)

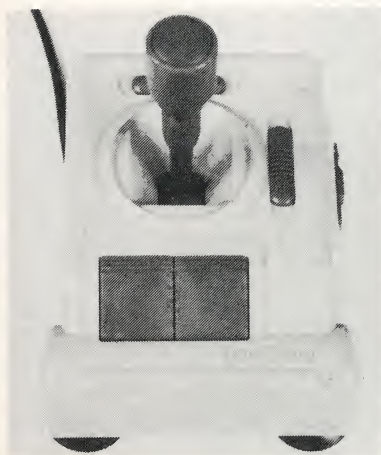
QS113 Stick: £13.99

Card: £14.99

113P Stick (Incl. Card): £27.99

QS123 Stick: £13.99

Card: congratulations QuickShot for including a speed adjuster. Why, though, is the three-way switch on the card itself and not accessible when the PC lid is closed, and what exactly do the 'Norm', 'Med' and 'Fast' markings mean in terms of Mhz? The electronics weren't the normal formula though and performance at the Med setting on my 12Mhz AT was fine. **QS 113 stick:** this is desk-top science-fic-



tion chic. It looks like some strange space vehicle, but its restrained colour scheme avoids that tacky appearance and ergonomically it scores highly by being equally suited to left and right handers. Suction cups keep it firmly planted, and the stick itself is short with a stubby top. The top-mounted centering sliders are slightly vulnerable to accidental movement, although they are slightly recessed. On the base are the free-floating switches while there's an auto-fire selector on the right-hand side.

In action: there was still a little springiness with auto-centering off. Otherwise the response was lovely with just enough resistance to aid accurate control, but not enough to make it hard work. With Freddy it was possible to put the high diver through a good routine, but on the tight-rope there was slightly too much resistance. With auto-centering turned off this was much easier and performed perfectly. It was necessary to engage centering for Soccer, when it gave the perfect feel for all those flashy turns. Providing you don't mind the modern design, this is an impressive stick which is also sold with its card.



QS 123 Warrior: matt, battleship grey and very sexily contoured, the Warrior describes itself as being 'for professional players'. Its shaft resembles a cobra with a big red fire button on top and a trigger behind, both sensibly placed for use with either hand. There's a small auto-fire switch on the handle and trimmer wheels

on the base, while the free-float switches are underneath along with four suction cups.

In action: things run smoothly: perhaps the action is too easy for a stick of this size when you can afford to give the movement some muscle. Not surprisingly it was very fast for Freddy's dive, but on the high wire it was just too fluid. A similar problem was encountered with Soccer. The relatively small base leaves nowhere to place your hand to help compensate for the over-easy action.

SUNCOM

Edge Stick: £19.99

Plus Stick: £27.99

Cards: £19.99/£24.99

Game Port 2 card: Suncom is another manufacturer which makes an effort to brand its product in the packaging. Despite the trade mark stencilled on the board, this card is another variation on the Taiwanese favourite and doesn't include speed adjustment.

Game Port 2 Plus card: The slightly more expensive Plus variation does allow you to tune the card speed to your CPU. This is achieved by the least convenient means, a pair of dip switches which are not available once the lid's back on your PC. Apart from that, it's the same, standard Taiwanese circuit. At least the packaging looks attractive and, more importantly, like all Suncom products it carries a two-year guarantee.

Analog Edge stick: cosmetically, Suncom's sticks all have a stunning family resemblance, so comments about the most junior member also apply to the Plus (and flight simulator specialist, Xtra, which we'll cover in a future issue). The finish is mid-grey with red buttons and a neatly rounded base. There are fire buttons at the rear of this plus one on top of the comfortably contoured stick, well placed for right or left thumbs. The

centering sliders are towards the bottom of the front and right sides, leaving them slightly vulnerable to accidental movement, especially if you try to hand-hold the stick (though the base is rather too large for this). There's a fire button selector on the underside but no free-floating. Suction cups can be attached if you wish.

In action: the Suncom uses slightly different electronics to most sticks, which is supposed to endow it with longer life. It certainly results in a stiffer reaction, even after giving the stick some loosening exercises as recommended in the accompanying leaflet. On Freddy's dive the action



Suncom's Analog Plus (above) and (top left) the Quickshot QS113.

was too stiff, but it performed better for the minute movements needed to maintain balance on the high wire. For Soccer it was rather to resistant though. Another irritating feature was a slight rattle on the top fire button which didn't seem to respond quite so sharply as it might.

Analog Plus stick: moving up a level, the Plus has rather more positive fire buttons and adds a trigger on the front of the handle. As the grip is well contoured this is a comfortable piece of design. There are slight cosmetic variations in the colour of the plastics, but the most important feature is the addition of variable rate auto-fire, controlled by a switch underneath and a slider on top of the base. The cable is now coiled, like a telephone's, which could

help keep your desk tidy.

In action: it seemed slightly slacker than the Edge and was well suited to Soccer and Freddy's high wire, though it's still not got the joystick jiggle of the dive. However if you want a stick which will make you work to move it, this is probably your best choice.

STICKING MY NECK OUT

If money is no object, then the choice of stick is simple. The Gravis is a joy to use and appears to be almost indestructible, but it's also extremely costly, so unless you're a dedicated gamer you may prefer something more disposable.

If you want a stick with a stiff response, your choice is simple - go for a Suncom. Of the small and square sticks, the KC3 wins my vote, though if you can spare more desk space the KT30 is a winner. The other option would be the Champ.

That only leaves cards. Here there are so many that are similar it's mainly a matter of price, though one with adjustable speed is worth the extra, especially if you have a fast machine. And Suncom's two-year guarantee is worth taking into account. Finally, if you want to use a digital stick with an analogue card, the little box from Euromax is a neat idea.



The Analog Edge and (far left) the QS123 Warrior.

CONTACTS

Active: (081) 752 0260

Bondwell (UK): (081) 365 1993

Electronic Zoo: (0453) 887008

Euromax: (0262) 601006

Powerplay: (0457) 876601

RC Simulations: (0272) 550900

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Could this be a dream come true, or is it your worst nightmare? To promote the imminent release of its *Elvira - Mistress Of The Dark* adventure game, Accolade is offering no less than 20 copies of the dark lady's very own video in this frighteningly easy competition.

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- 1) Which dastardly development team is responsible for this production?
- 2) When will *Elvira - The Computer Game* hit the shops?
- 3) Name two previous Accolade releases.

If you're having trouble with some of the answers, check out the preview section, beginning on page 85. When you've answered the questions to your satisfaction, pop your entry on a postcard (or the back of a sealed envelope if that's not too much trouble) and send it without delay to: Witch Hunt, PC Leisure, EMAP Images, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. The closing date for entries is December 21st 1990.

SMALL PRINT

Employees of Accolade and EMAP or any of their associated companies are barred from entering. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into... and that's about it really.

GOING PUBLIC

ver the last three issues there's been a lot of talk of Public Domain, Shareware, Bulletin Boards, Hair Bear, Cheese Boards - well, some of it might have been for all the sense it made to me.

Yet, somewhere behind the vague technobabble, there was something extremely inviting about the prospect of being able to pick up a great big bunch of software for little more than the price of the disks it comes on. So, grabbing the bit between my teeth, I decided to get out there and try to find some of that silicon gold.

Then came the first problem.

How could I find one of these mysterious 'libraries', which are supposedly dotted about the length and breadth of the country. It was here that my true flair for detection came in - I looked through an old issue of *PC Leisure* and found a number for a company called The Public Domain Software Library... this sounded like it could just possibly be a public domain software library.

A quick phone call ensued. I told the chap precisely what I wanted ("erm, do you have any good games please?"), he asked me for my credit card number and before you could say "What... is that it?" I was nine quid poorer and a collection-swelling seven

(count 'em) games were already flying in my general direction through the wonders of her majesty's postal service.

What eventually arrived a couple of days later was a single 3.5" floppy disk. Not a lot for nine quid you might think, but all of the promised games were in fact on there: all due to the clever compaction process known as 'zipping' (as used on this issue's cover disk). Apparently, 5.25" disk users can also have the whole collection, but on two disks rather than one (lucky devils).

Within minutes I was happily unzipping this wealth of data onto my fast-filling hard disk and all set to enter a whole new era of gaming. It really was that easy.

What follows is a brief look at some of the games I was sent, all of which originated from a Scottish programming team, Wizard. According to its own blurb, which appears at the beginning of each game, Wizard is: "...a collective of programming enthusiasts, writing games at a furious

Enticed by the promise of ludicrously cheap software, Jimmy Taylor picks up his telephone and heads for the Public Domain.

pace to advance [its] programming knowledge and skills, and sell these creative outpourings to strategy games enthusiasts all over the world, at prices that won't break the bank."

Each game carries a message stating Wizard's philosophy which runs something along the lines of: "Wizard believes that current PC games are overpriced and over packaged (not to mention lacking in imagination). We are creating a series of unique and innovative games, designed to take full advantage of the size and power of IBM PCs and compatibles. Our motivation is love of programming..." and so on.

While it's true that Wizard games are neither overpriced nor overpackaged, none of them is exactly of a high enough quality to warrant a commercial release either. That said, the results of the team's labours are well presented text-based strategy games, and although they won't challenge *Midwinter* or *Ultima VI* in any department they do offer a good deal of solid gameplay - especially the text-based strategy games.

Here's a selection of just a few of the delights housed on the Wizard disk...

THE SOCCER GAME

Not, as you might think, an arcade-style footie game, rather a football management strategy affair where your day-to-day decisions - financial, tactical and managerial - ultimately have a crucial effect on your team's results.

The idea is (with the help of a sarcastic staff, accessed by pressing F2) to buy and sell players, develop your squad and pick

Team	Int'l	Name	Pos	ST	ST	C	E	A	INJ
1	Thorvald	Goalkeeper	Low	Superb	Supreme	Fair	23	No	
2	Bergsson	Defender	Bad	Poor	Fair	Ace	20	No	
3	Ben Howe	Defender	Low	Poor	Poor	Good	16	No	
4	Sedgley	Defender	Low	Superb	Fair	Supreme	21	No	
5	Howells	Defender	Bad	Low	Poor	Good	16	No	
6	Hubbett	Midfielder	Low	Good	Superb	Superb	20	No	
7	Stewart	Midfielder	Low	Low	Fair	Ace	19	No	
8	Gascoigne	Midfielder	Bad	Bad	Poor	Bad	21	No	
9	Hayle	Attacker	Low	Fair	Good	Poor	24	No	
10	Lincker	Attacker	Bad	Poor	Superb	Ace	23	No	
11	Allen	Attacker	Low	Ace	Poor	Ace	23	No	
RESERVES:									
12	Walsh	Attacker	Low	Average	Poor	Superb	30	No	
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									

Team

Alter name

Rearrange team

Transfer list

Display

Print-out

F2-Staff
Help
Quit
League
Play

A poor showing by 'The Lilywhites' in the soccer game they're calling *The Soccer Game*.

the best available team each week to face the opposition which the computer throws at you. The game itself is then played out in a textual fashion ("Gascoigne crosses to Stewart who shoots high over the bar..." and so on), with weekly league tables and news of transfer dealings etc following each week's outing.

At the end of the day, Brian, the ultimate aim is to get a number of results and get to the top of your chosen profession - either with your first club, or, better still, with one of the First Division teams which is clever enough to spot your potential and poach you.

But along the way there's an almost unmanageable amount of facts and figures thrown onto your managerial desk: weekly accounts, duration of players' contracts, transfer offers from other managers, skill and fitness reports and so on.

While it all works pretty well, there are a couple of little oversights - for example, it's possible to alter a player's name, but it's not possible to alter his position, so if you find one of your midfielders hits the back of the net on a regular basis, you still have to manually move him into a striking position before each game as the program automatically reshuffles the players back into their designated positions before each match.

Also, at one stage, I swapped the goalkeeper with one of the forwards without it having too significant effect on the result - we still lost heavily.

While *The Soccer Game* doesn't actually break any new ground in its own genre, it's still strangely compulsive - if only for the reason that you can enter the names of your favourite (and not so favourite) players and then have the pleasure of dropping them when you feel like it.

Paying the £12 registration fee entitles the user to the full version which has the added attractions of load and save game facilities (absolutely essential if you get into it), unlimited seasons and the ability to permanently alter the names of both team and players.

ROCKSTAR

Another strategy affair, this one is described as being 'adults only' and the intro goes on to say that 'some may find the language offensive'. However it wasn't the language (which was very mild stuff really) that was most disturbing, but the constant references to drug-taking which should have carried the warning.

Although, like *The Soccer Game*, this one involves making choices to further a career, in practice it's very different indeed to the sporting program, and to be perfectly honest it's not nearly as gripping.

Basically, the selection of all choices from a series of menus tends to limit the player's feeling of involvement, while the options themselves are so unrealistic (for example, it's possible to make a record straight away - a fairly duff record, but a

record nonetheless) that you end up not really caring whether you ever succeed or not.

And then there's the drugs...

I'm not sure if the basic message is anti-drug or not (at one stage my rock 'n' roll alter-ego collapsed from a heroin overdose, thus seriously curtailing his career), but the fact that a whole host of narcotics is always available is bad news in itself. Surely naming a list of drugs as long as this (and then trying to recreate their effects by altering the screen colours) is an education in itself - and many users are likely to miss the subtleties of the 'anti' message.

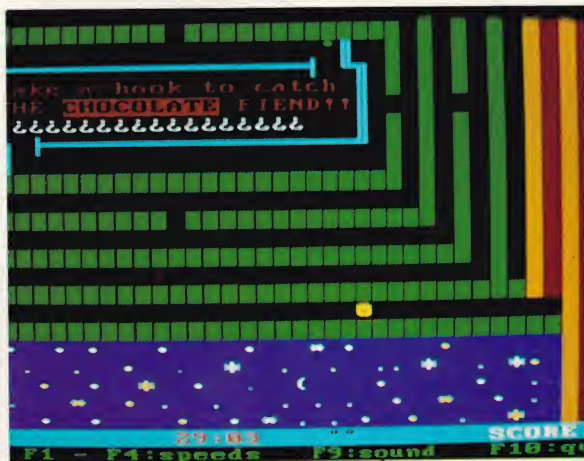
INSANITY

The introduction promises a lot, but the arcade 'action' that's delivered doesn't really live up to the hype. What's actually on offer is a straightforward (and very simplistic) maze exploration game with a little (very little in fact) spice added by the inclusion of enemies, weapons, extra lives and mystery bonuses.

In spite of all of these, there's still little more to it than simply using the cursor keys to move a tiny 'smiley' face around a huge irritating maze.

The results of this, practically Wizard's only attempt at producing an arcade game, show good reason why the team generally sticks to text-based strategy puzzlers.

Is it *Insanity*, or is it *Amaze*? Either way, this one makes two appearances in the Wizard collection.



COMPENDIUM

As the name suggests, this is a taster of five small games from the obviously vast Wizard library. There's a wide variety in this sample, but as you'd expect none of them are as polished as a single full game would be.

Insanity makes another appearance, although this time it's a cut-down version called *Amaze*. The 'action' is even more basic than its parent program, and it starts to pall very quickly.

However, *The Soccer Game* has a rival in *Coach*, although the understandable lack of options means that it's more the Tranmere Rovers of football strategy games than the Liverpool. Nonetheless, it's enjoyable in its own right and a good

option if you haven't got the hours necessary to spend on its more complex stablemate.

Remember the board game version of Mastermind? Well, *Masterbrain* is almost exactly the same thing, except that it uses cards instead of coloured pegs, and your original choice of four variables goes up to a maximum of 10 as you work through the levels. Good clean fun, but a little too easy.

Millionaire is a quirky sort of throw-away item, but it's quite a laugh nonetheless. What it all amounts to is a single screen which resembles, if anything, an electronic fruit machine from which you're supposed to take £500 and turn it into £1,000,000.

Choose between working or playing, buying shares or investing in business or even gambling the lot - but make sure that you stay healthy so that you live long enough to reach your target. *Millionaire* is fun, but the rapidly flashing lights and constant beeps mean that it will only be a short-term diversion.

Probably the most disappointing 'strategy' game of the lot is *Stockmarket*, an allegedly fast-moving simulation of the joys and heartaches of buying shares. Basically, all that's involved is a quick-fire buying and selling of shares from a list that changes too quickly to allow any real strategy to be put into effect - you've, in effect, got to think with your fingers.

Also, the classic strategy of selling shares that you don't own, hoping that they'll go down in price before you have to buy them isn't allowed, thus making this a game for 'bulls' only.

AND THE REST...

Other games on the disk include *Capitalist*, which is basically two cash-based strategy games - *Punter* and *Oligopoly* - rolled into one, *Greyhound* and *Grand Prix* (respectively, simulations of going to the dogs and managing a Formula One racing team).

And that's only a single disk from one of many libraries. If this is anything to go by there could be a wealth of entertaining and playable games out there just waiting to be picked up. Happy hunting... and let us know (at the magazine's usual address) if you pick up anything remarkable in your travels.

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Screen shots from Atari ST format.



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Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the game play and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computers specifications.

VIRTUAL UNREALITY

It read like a who's who of the computer entertainment Hall Of Fame:

Myron Krueger, the man who first coined the phrase 'Virtual Reality'; Chris 'Balance Of Power' Crawford; Brian 'Infocom/Loom' Moriarty and dozens more names from past and present. There they all were on the podium, wildly gesticulating and sketching out the future of digital gamesmanship as only true enthusiasts can.

And since Intertainment '90 was a conference on new technology, it was only natural that it was the technology that kept breaking down. "Never go on stage with children or animals," chortled video games pioneer Nolan Bushnell as he mounted the stage to demonstrate Commodore's new CDTV "... or multimedia," he added ruefully as the system went down for the nth time during the session.

Mice-driven 'Hyperfiction' demos somehow found themselves on miceless machines; Brian Moriarty's demonstration of the musical prowess of Loom barely managed to beep; and throughout each session a phantom loudspeaker that no-one could identify kept interrupting with surreal snatches of conversation and music. Completely phased, one helpless speaker threw up his hands and asked the audience whether he was really there, or had he somehow tripped a switch and emerged in another virtual reality universe. No-one was sure of the answer.

But at the end of the day (and what you're about to read is only a report of the first day's proceedings, thanks to the nature of *PC Leisure* deadlines) what emerged was a fascinating picture of the future of gaming, including news of many encouraging developments for PC gamers. Here's what went down...



Rich Gold, the product manager who brought you the Powerglove, struggles with his creation by the bar of the Marriot Marquis Hotel. "We worked 15 hours a day, seven days a week for months to beat production deadlines," he recalled without any trace of nostalgia, "but in the end, it wasn't the electronics that caused the problem, it was the tailoring of the glove." Apparently the variation in hand size between users is so great that Mattel had tremendous difficulty producing a glove design that would be comfortable for everyone. "We were lucky to have a large team of seamstresses at Mattel," he explained, "thanks to our production of clothes for Barbie. In the end they cracked the problem, but it took endless redesigns..." Yup, the Powerglove was brought to you courtesy of Barbie Doll technology.

TERRA SENSATION

Perhaps the most exciting development for PC gamers who fancy the occasional arcade blast emerged as an aside during an opening speech by a representative of Sega US. He reported that Sega Japan was nearing completion of a joint project with IBM which, characteristically, no-one from Sega was later prepared to comment further upon.

After extensive tugging of the grapevine, however, what emerged is this: Sega and

When gaming gurus gathered in New York to discuss the future, Steve Cooke was there to sort the CD-ROMs from the DVIs...

IBM is in the final stages of producing a machine, provisionally called the Terra PC, which has a fully-blown Sega Megadrive 16-bit games console built into the motherboard. Based on 286 VGA technology, the system allows the PC gamer to quit *WordPerfect* and then plug his *E.S.W.A.T.* or *Moonwalker* Megadrive cartridge straight in for a taste of state-of-the-art 16-bit gaming.

Since the Sega Megadrive looks like being the hot console property in the UK for the next 18 months at least, and since it already has a great selection of superb arcade titles, this is tremendous news. There's just one drawback. No-one was prepared to comment on a possible launch date in Japan, let alone Europe. Watch this space...

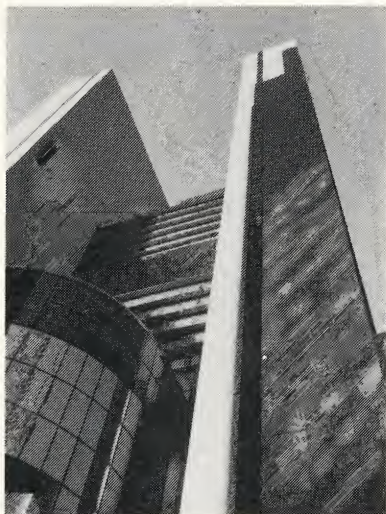
PC POWERGLOVE

Mattel's Powerglove turned out to be the gaming sensation of 1990 in the US. Using a combination of ultra-sound and pressure sensor technology, it allows the user to don a gauntlet-styled device that then enables him or her to manipulate images on-screen in three dimensions.

Developed from VPL's Cyberspace Dataglove, the Powerglove sounds like a gimmick, but actually performs pretty well. The only trouble is, it's designed exclusively for the Nintendo games console. PC hack-

ers have, however, been successfully butchering the device to link it up to their machines - an understandable state of affairs since the nearest PC equivalent costs around \$8,000 instead of \$80. The bad news is that Mattel hasn't responded by producing an official version.

That's not through spite, but for legal reasons. The original licence that Mattel took up did not allow it to develop the technology for other systems. Good news, therefore, that the PC conversion rights



Scene of the Entertainment '90 conference: the Marriot Marquis Hotel just off Times Square. All sessions were very well attended: perhaps the delegates were too scared of being mugged to leave the hotel!

have now been handed over and we can expect a PC version by the end of next year.

It won't be coming from Mattel, however. No-one is absolutely sure which company has got the PC rights to this technology, but the name on most people's lips is Logitech, of mouse renown. Let's, erm... give them a big hand.

CDI GOES PC

Philips was busy demonstrating its interactive compact disk CD-I system at the show - or trying to. Techno-gremlins got onto the platform once again, sadly, and every program crashed.

Despite rumours of eternal delays on the launch of this powerful video/audio/interactive machine, a spokesman for the company declared firmly that it would be on sale by the end of Summer 1991, with full-motion video and a price tag of under \$1,000.

Philips also announced a new 386 MS-DOS development platform for CD-I costing, wait for it, \$19,000. The system uses

Games design guru Chris Crawford (right) at the end of his session. Chris assaulted his audience with the statement: "Simulation! Don't talk to me about simulation. You've got a machine that can put 256 colours on screen and, when it comes to operational realism, it can't even simulate a brick!"

Commodore's CDTV's in abundance - for the first time ever. And they all seemed to work... well, almost.

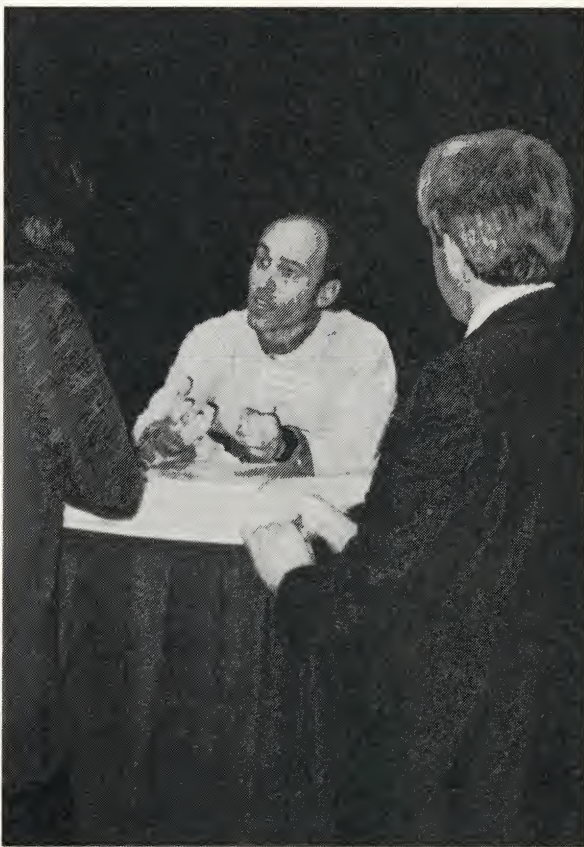
the trend-setting low-cost Headstart CD-PC set-up released in 1989. So if you want to generate your own full-motion video, CD-quality sound, 'point and click' interactive games, all you need is a blank cheque and a pen.

LORD OF THE RINGS

Remember *Bard's Tale*? *Wasteland*? *Neuromancer*? Now Interplay Productions, the team behind all of those games, has picked up the Tolkien licence to produce the *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy for home computers. The first game is about to be launched (it only crashed once during the demo session - probably the best-behaved piece of software in the whole conference) and it looks very tasty indeed.

Older gamers will probably remember Melbourne House's rather pitiful attempt to pack Tolkien's masterpiece into silicon following its original success with *The Hobbit*. Interplay's version follows the original very faithfully, but, thank heavens, abandons the adventure game format in favour of a system that looks uncannily like Origin's *Times Of Lore* - evidence of a debt that, decently, Interplay was quick to acknowledge.

Just in case you haven't played Times Of

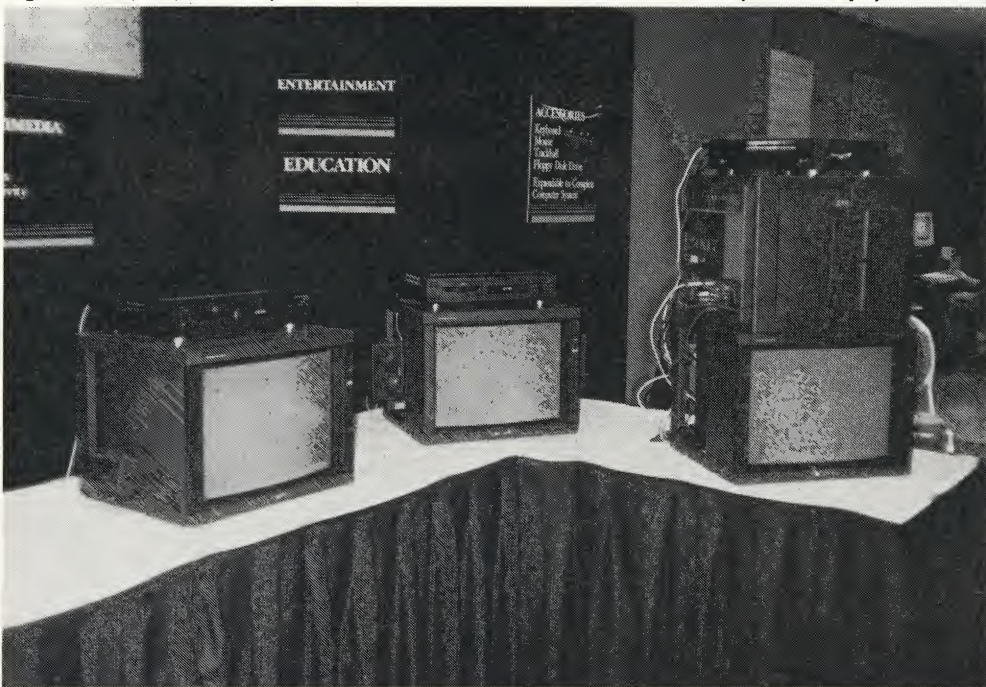


Lore, the game uses a slightly offset overhead view to give a quasi-3D perspective of a scrolling landscape, with buildings becoming 'transparent' when entered. The screen detail in LOR is pretty impressive: below the location window is an icon control panel that enables you to interact with other characters you meet (there are many), by calling up simple menus offering a series of sub-choices.

Unlike traditional RPGs that persist in giving you a single character representation of your party, no matter how many people are in it, this one takes the *Ultima VI* approach of showing you all the members of your merry band as you explore Middle Earth. The game follows the original book pretty closely - the first thing you do is recruit Merry and Sam outside your Hobbit-hole. They then follow you obediently and intelligently as you travel onwards.

Interplay found designing a game based on an existing plot pretty tricky. As its spokesman pointed out: "Players who have read the book will know how to solve the problems, but if you change events or personalities, people complain. We got out of this dilemma by adding in new characters who either could have been there in the original or who were in there in a minor role, and then building in separate stories around them."

The game's puzzles seem to be mostly of the object 'find/use' variety, but there are many characterful interactions - one of the first being with Lobelia, who will nag you throughout the game if you don't hand over the key to your hole before leaving the district. The graphics were excel-



lent and the sound was... well, who knows? You don't imagine that the sound was actually working, surely?

HYPERFICTION - HYPE OR HIP?

What the hell *is* Hyperfiction anyway? Certainly, most of the conference delegates decided that it couldn't be nearly as interesting as the Virtual Reality session next door, so the speakers who set out to answer the question found a nearly empty hall. A pity really, because Hyperfiction could turn out to be both a powerful creative tool for writers and a rewarding experience for readers.

Hyperfiction is based loosely on 'Hypertext' principles, which means text is divided into 'frames', each frame consisting of a segment of information. Any word in a frame can be a 'button', clicking on which will bring up another, relevant, textual frame. In other words, Hypertext enables you to explore reference or narrative in a parallel, intuitive way rather than in a purely 'beginning, middle, end' linear sequence.

Here in the UK, Hyperfiction is simply a dilettante weirdo's diversion, but in the US Hyperfiction titles are now being published on disk to critical acclaim. John McDaid demonstrated an extraordinary hyperfiction program called *Uncle Buddy's Funhouse*. The program mixes text and graphics interfaces to provide a surreal interactive experience which manages nevertheless to maintain a narrative structure and generate considerable atmosphere.

Programs like Uncle Buddy are similar

to, and to a certain extent inspired by, games such as the Apple Macintosh classic, *Cosmic Osmo* (the successor to *Manhole*, now available on the PC). The session demonstrated emphatically that 'point and click' interaction/exploration does not need to be confined to graphical game scenarios, but can also be used to tackle more serious themes. Expect to hear, see, and click on Hyperfiction a lot more in the near future.

DVI DEVELOPS

DVI, just in case you didn't know, is a technology (originally developed by RCA and then licensed to Intel) which forms the basis of most current IBM full-motion video initiatives. The technology consists of an (expensive) chip set that provides real-time compression and decompression at such high speed that you can pull data off compact disc fast enough to maintain a video-quality full-screen animation.

A company called Empruve has now

combined DVI technology with a completely new set of hardware design concepts that, with the exception of size, recall strongly the original Alan Kay conception of the Dynabook - a portable multimedia station that can be used to do practically anything except wash the dishes.

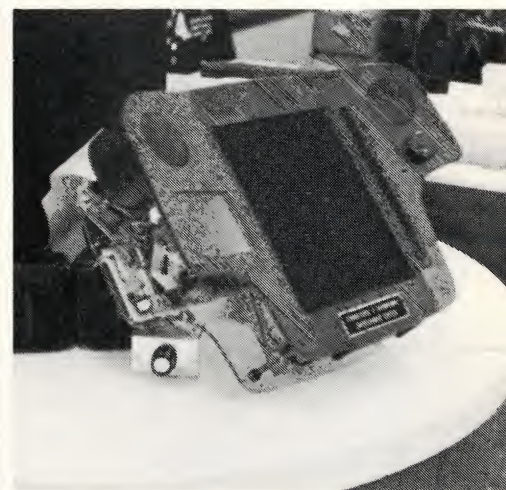
Called the Cornucopia, the unit has to be the most extraordinary PC ever seen. Supplied without a keyboard (though you can get one as a peripheral), the unit has a built-in CD drive and an A4-sized vertical aspect screen with a very clear black on white back-lit LCD display featuring 640x480



John McDaid, creator of *Uncle Buddy's Funhouse*, answers questions after the session on Hyperfiction. He deserved a wider hearing...

An exhibition model of Empruve's Cornucopia, cut away to reveal a 386 PC with 1Mb of RAM, a CD-ROM drive and... no keyboard.

panel are mounted on a swivel that allows you use the system either in A4 portrait or landscape mode, as well as in 'book' (broad base, laid flat), the only other hardware feature is a knob for control settings and that's it - a very neat, aesthetically pleasing unit that deserves a lot of attention.



Brian Moriarty (left), the man who brought you games such as Infocom's *Wishbringer* and *Loom*, poses beside the machine without a sound board. Oh, and since *Loom* is mouse-driven, it didn't have a mouse either. Talking about Tolkien, Brian remarked that: "Stereotypes are great for game designers - you just drop in a dwarf and everyone knows he's good at picking locks and wielding an axe."

MS-DOS GAMING LEAPS AHEAD

One thing all delegates were agreed on - the great increase in PC gaming and games add-ons. Just two figures to cheer you up: while consolemania rules worldwide, the humble PC has increased games sales by 80 per cent and - in the States - 60 per cent of users now have add-on sound boards.

The beep is almost buried.





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(Rainbow Arts)			



nce again, *PC Leisure* brings you the most up-to-date and comprehensive PC games review section anywhere. And once again the promise is the same... we may not be able to cover every release that's made it to the shelves over the past three months, but what we do promise is that what's here is definitive - each game has been thoroughly tested by an expert, so the rating it receives is an authoritative guide to its worth. The information panel is designed to cram as much information as possible into the minimum of space. The publisher information (price and telephone number) is for those of you who have difficulty in finding the game you desire - if you can't find it, give the publisher a ring and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction. The information immediately below shows which media (disk size) the game is available on, which graphics standard it supports (the screenshot shown will depict the most advanced graphics array supported, usually VGA), whether it uses a mouse or joystick (the vast majority of games use the keyboard as their standard controller) and if it supports one of the two major sound add-ons, either AdLib's or Roland's.

ESSENTIALS

PC Leisure's recommended software of the last three months



- 1**
4D Sports Boxing
- 2**
PGA Tour Golf
- 3**
Their Finest Hour
- 4**
Rick Dangerous 2
- 5**
Operation Stealth
- 6**
The Secret Of Monkey Island
- 7**
Ultima VI
- 8**
Silent Service II
- 9**
Wonderland
- 10**
Midwinter

SEEING STARS

The rating system is about as simple as it's possible to be. But for those who'd like a little explanation...

☆☆☆☆☆	ESSENTIAL
☆☆☆☆	GOOD
☆☆☆	AVERAGE
☆☆	MEDIOCRE
☆	POOR

SIMEARTH

They simply don't come any bigger than this. Forget kids' stuff like global thermo-nuclear war, strategic global warfare, global warming, city simulations or anything else - this knocks them all into one big fat policeman's helmet.

I've just had the enormous pleasure of spending some time with *SimEarth - The Gaia Concept*, which is, in effect, a planet simulator. In other words, it's a computer-based toy which lets you create entire worlds, or influence the development of one of seven planets through three levels of difficulty.

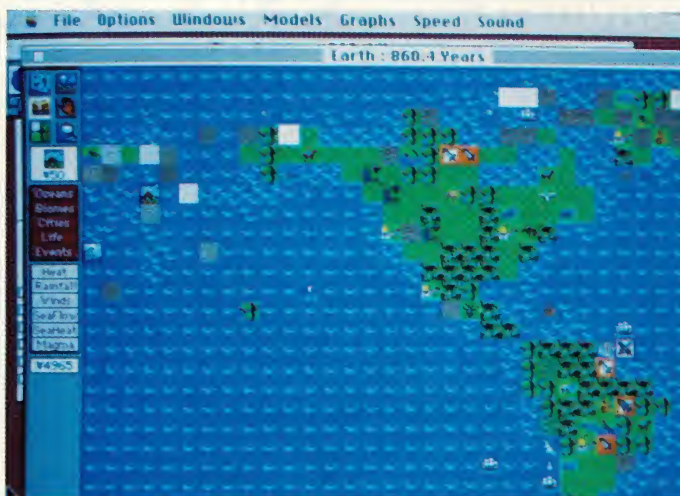
And I mean really influence development.

You want a mountain range? You've got one! Is your Stone Age population cut off from the central land mass that has all the food it needs to survive and develop? Then set off a few volcanoes - not too close mind - throw up an archipelago after a couple of thousand years and they'll make their way across. Or maybe they won't, in which case they'll all die out. So what? You can always make the dinosaurs intelligent. And if all else fails, you can always come down like the hand of God, literally pick those suckers up and move them to a different continent.

This enormous flexibility is the reason that I've been careful to call it a toy - it's not a game in the accepted sense of the word. Although there is an aim of sorts: basically, you have 10 billion years to develop a life form with a high enough technology level to be able to leave the planet before the sun goes supernova. What you end up with is an infinitely variable number of simulations that can happily waste your time from here to, well... eternity.

You can either step into today's planet Earth and alter the course of the future by setting off a few well-chosen atomic bombs, or start from scratch (as I did many times), trying to create a world out of the cosmic dust that howls - silently - through the vacuum of space. You can even try 'terraforming' (making land) on inhospitable planets such as Mars and Venus.

If you'd love a toy with near-



infinite variety and massive attention to detail, then this is well worth the price of admission - so long as you're prepared to put in the millenniums.

There's a lot of stuff about the theory of Gaia in the manual which I've referred to in the box below. That's not because it isn't important - it's actually a serious quasi-scientific theory - but because you don't need to really understand it or believe in it to enjoy the simulation. So if you're interested, read the massive manual. If you're not, read on...

SimEarth lets you control everything to do with planetary devel-

opment, from the raising and lowering of the land mass to the creation and population of the oceans. Everything's adjustable, from the movement of the magma beneath the Earth's crust, the falling of meteors, placing of biomes (a major ecosystem such as a temperate grassland, tropical forest or desert) natural disasters (plague, volcanoes, hurricanes, earthquakes - watch San Francisco fall into the sea!) to tidal waves and fires.

The program provides you with all the tools necessary to track your success - or otherwise - at handling the atmosphere, life on

HELLO BIRDS... HELLO TREES...

"I recognise that to view the Earth as if it were alive is just a convenient, but different way of organising the facts of the Earth. I am of course prejudiced in favour of Gaia and have filled my life for the past 25 years with the thought that Earth may be alive: not as the ancients saw her - a sentient Goddess with a purpose and foresight - but alive like a tree."

A moving - if deeply personal - view of life on Earth, or just a load of old tosh? Well, it frankly doesn't matter much whether you go along with James Lovelock's theory of the way the universe works - you can still enjoy rampaging around the SimEarth universe, creating

water planets and casually drowning millions of your home-brewed Smearthlings in a primordial soup.

Still, there's obviously more here than some half-baked New Age theory about the way things work. Certainly the idea of the Earth being made up of four interrelated components - the Lithosphere, Hydrosphere, Atmosphere, Biosphere and the Toshosphere (sorry James) has an elegance to it, and those of you who are less prejudiced can pursue these and other themes in the learned appendices you'll find in the manual.

Now, however, I'm off to drop a few more of those ice mete-

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Roland	✗	AdLib	✗

the planet (how many avians, trichordates, eukaryotes and prokaryotes did you create this century?) technological change and those difficult-to-understand biomes.

In order to communicate this information overload, SimEarth uses a number of views. The most important of which are the Edit screen (where you get a close-up of what's going on in the world) a Map screen (which pulls out for the bigger picture) and the planetary view itself (which I found to be worse than useless).

Onto each of these views SimEarth projects layers of information. Thus it's possible to look at the USA with all the layers showing - oceans, biomes, cities, life and events. If you do, however, you're likely to get mighty confused trying to decipher that jumble of creatures, vegetation, natural and unnatural disasters, and settlements as they appear, disappear and move inexorably around the globe. So by clicking on the left-hand menu, you can tell SimEarth which layers you want to show at any one time.

Additionally, you can examine the temperature and currents in the sea, check out the magma and monitor heat, rainfall and winds. It makes you realise what a complicated job running the universe actually is.

Walking through a single game won't really give you the flavour, so, instead, here's a selection of highs and lows (mostly lows) that I've experienced while creating and editing my own worlds in the last few weeks. In each instance, I've tried to focus on something different in order to cover as



many different aspects of the thing as is possible.

Here goes...

Yo! 0.3 billion years in on Gruntworld, and we have oceans! Created somewhat arbitrarily by slinging in meteors and encouraging volcanic eruptions, but they're definitely oceans - what the hell, the universe is a brutal place.

It's so brutal that around 917.5 million years into my reign I decide to let off an atomic explosion on the northernmost continent. With a satisfying roar, I create nothing more than a brand new desert where before there

had been a thriving forest...

46.5 into post-atomic earth's history and a few well-placed A-bombs later, it's complete chaos out there...

3.7 years into a total global warming scenario and Britannia no longer rules the waves because she's been turned into one huge bronchial desert with no annual rainfall, a constant temperature of 25 degrees Celsius, and no sapiens.

Change the atmosphere model and a few years later, we go through a period of plague, only to discover that Scotland is now a

teeming jungle with 248 centimetres of rain a year, and Europe is consumed by raging fires.

Cut the sun completely and within SimEarth seconds, plague and a new ice age have come tearing down across northern Europe, and while the skiing will be good this year, there'll be no-one around to enjoy it...

'Alert! Life/Quality HELLISH! Arts/Media needs energy' beams in a warning. Add more money only to discover science grinding to a halt and clogging up any chance of moving civilisation forward... waste half an hour trying

to encourage stone-age man to invest energy in nuclear power before realising that they simply don't have the tools to succeed.

Sit there, unable to do a thing as Earth dies of old age... Use the mouse pointer to poke the Gaia image of Earth in the eye in frustration and recoil as it makes an odd, hurt mewling sound.

I suppose that it's something to do with the enormity of the project, but the presentation and display aren't all that they could be: the screen re-draws rather slowly, and the windows don't close unless you click very deliberately on them. You don't need this sort of distraction when the continental drift rate has just doubled due to a careless mouse stroke.

To be fair, the manual points out that the reaction time of the program depends very much on the machine you're running it on. SimEarth is a devil of a simulator, so it's performing loads of complex calculations whenever you choose a particular option. On my 286 it was just about OK - though I did still get that off-putting cursor flicker - but on anything slower you may find it seizes up too much for comfortable gameplay.

It's also important that you use just about as good a colour display as you possibly can, because if you want to tell the difference between a Cetacean and a plain old fish, then the colour differ-



ence is going to become more than just cosmetic (by the way, a Cetacean is actually a family of mammals that is exclusively seaborne and includes dolphins and whales - and I know that because SimEarth's creators have thoughtfully included a glossary of terms for ecological dunces like me).

The nearest thing to this is probably *Populous*, but my brief acquaintance with that game leads me to believe there's no real comparison. SimEarth is a fantastically complex simulator for those of you who want to take the challenge. Despite my reservations about the speed of the interface and the juddery cursor, SimEarth is the richest, most complex computer toy I've ever seen and should be an enormous success.

☆☆☆☆☆

Rob Beattie

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT



Interactive Movie specialist Cinemaware's latest offering is a tribute to the B-rated shock horror science fiction flicks of the 50s.

Based mostly on *Them!* (the cult classic starring Steve McQueen that's become a champion of the genre), it tells a tale familiar to anyone who knows their B-movie stuff: a sleepy town in the American mid-west is attacked by a plague of giant radioactive ants bent on destruction of all mankind, and only the butch hero can stop them.

In this case, the town is Lizard Breath, a typical isolated redneck town in the heart of the Arizona desert, and the hero is you, visiting scientist Doctor Greg Bradley, in town to collect rock samples for your research work.

When a huge meteorite crashes out in the desert late one night, things start going awry - and you decide to investigate. Before long it becomes clear that ants - the sort that are more likely to tread on you than the other way around - are closing in on the town. With only 15 days before

they take over, time is short.

For much of the game, *It Came From The Desert* is more like a detective thriller than anything else, as it sets you off on an attempt to gather enough evidence to persuade the mayor that there's a disaster looming. Only with physical proof will the bespectacled buffoon believe your story and agree to help defend the town from the impending invasion.

In order to get said proof, it's necessary to extract information about the ants from the local residents (each with their own personality), many of whom are clueless as to what's going on - others, however, are simply reluctant to talk. Only by treating them properly will you find out anything.

Of the many characters you can interact with, the ones that prove to be most helpful are Doctor Platt, the resident scientist who helps make sense of the information and evidence you collect, and Dusty, a DJ at the local radio station. In addition there's a sprinkling of less savoury (but nevertheless helpful) characters in the

form of Burt, the news-hungry reporter, Geez, a wrinkled old gold prospector who comes up with some interesting finds, and a mysterious Fortune Teller whose crystal ball can be startlingly accurate in its predictions.

The first of the game's many arcade elements comes into play when you come face-to-face with one or more of the giant ants. Armed only with a pistol and a handful of grenades, you must either fight them off (Doc Platt's information is invaluable here) or run for it - either way there's a risk, either from a bigger than average insect bite or exhaustion in the baking desert.

Should you come to any harm, you're immediately carted off to the local hospital to recover. Should you then choose not to waste valuable time in bed, you can escape - cue another arcade sequence where you race through the hospital before the irate staff can get their hands on you.

Extra plot elements are skillfully woven into the overall picture: for example, who is the mysterious and beautiful girl who turns

up at your door in shock - is she good news or bad? Other dubious characters include the Hellcats, Lizard Breath's resident band of no-good punks who won't think twice about killing you just for kicks.

If you do manage to get hold of all the necessary evidence in time, the gameplay shifts into strategy mode where you're put in charge of the town's defences - police, army and civilian volunteers. Here you retire to a back seat, overseeing the action from a tactical map - but for the more action-oriented, you can choose to seek out the ants' nest and wipe out the insects personally, Rambo-style.

As a tribute to 50's science fiction, *It Came From The Desert* is brilliant - the mood and atmosphere of the movies have been captured perfectly, right down to the mannerisms of the characters. What's surprising is that at the same time it's one hell of a game too, blending strategy, detective work and good solid action together in such a way that no single element is dominant - there's a lot more here than just the sum of the parts.

With the strict time limit forcing you to perform well, the tension mounts in a way not seen since Cinemaware's earlier classic, *Rocket Ranger*. A superb game, and Cinemaware's best attempt at creating a movie-like experience yet. Not to be missed.

★★★★★

Gary Whitta

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VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	✓



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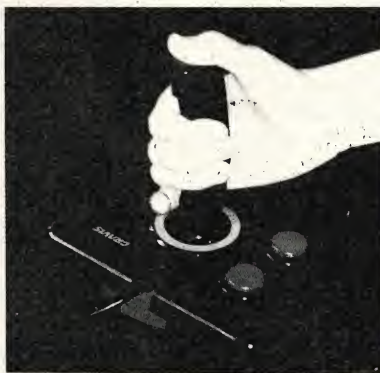
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OPERATION HARRIER

Devotees of flight simulators should approach this with care. For though its title may suggest a serious simulation of the VTOL aircraft, it's simply a shoot 'em up with a touch of strategy thrown in. There's nothing wrong with that of course, but only if it's executed to god effect.

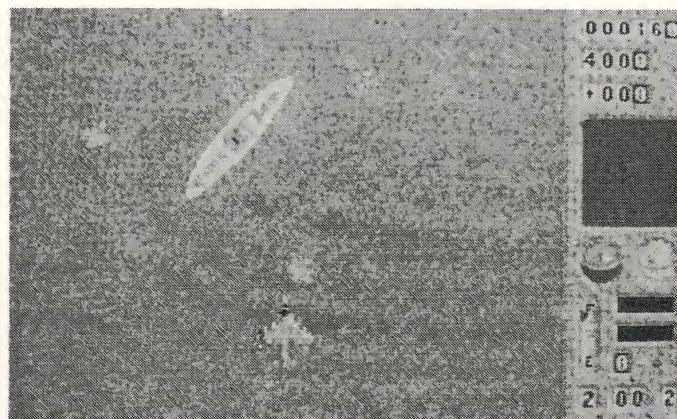
Operation Harrier uses the 'Rotoscope' system first employed in Creative Materials' *Rotax*. This unique method of presentation sees everything move around the game's central character (or sprite). What this means here, is

that other objects rotate around you as you fly about. In practice that seems to entail you going round in circles as preposterous amounts of enemy jets attack from all sides.

The game breaks down into a series of nine missions, which involve anything from simple tasks such as bombing runways to defending a whole fleet from attack. Before attempting each mission you have to go through the highly tedious process of loading weaponry aboard which seems unnecessary since *Operation Harrier* isn't that precise in any other department. A neat animated interlude depicts the take-off - and then you're off.

To the right of the playing screen is an instrument panel which shows the usual data (height, speed, fuel etc.), and a radar which supplies a grid reference and a rough idea of what's in the vicinity. By toggling to a map you can build up a better idea of the terrain.

Fuel and weaponry are limited, but new supplies are available from islands in the North and South, while it's also possible to



refuel in the air by latching on to one of the passing air tankers. Despite all of this, it's never made clear just how you locate a target.

There are some nice touches, particularly the interlude screens which depict your progress: a cigar-chewing commanding displays less and less patience with your efforts if you lose aircraft, and you're shown floating by your downed plane or escaping from the burning wreck when you go down.

Essentially, the real problem

here is gameplay. The Rotoscope system simply doesn't create any sense of realism, nor does it replace it with the high speed thrills of a red hot shoot 'em up. Things aren't helped either by the failure to provide a joystick option, which limits the player to some rather awkward key controls. *Operation Harrier* doesn't have the longevity of a serious game or the addictiveness of a passing arcade infatuation.

☆☆

Mike Pattenden

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5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
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MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

And now for something completely different... It's...

The least likely computer games licence of all time: Cleese, Chapman, Gilliam, Jones, Palin and Idle's many-headed monster has finally made it to silicon, having done its apprenticeship on TV, in books, on record and in film.

And surprisingly, despite the obvious difficulties which the

developers must have faced in bringing the original alternative comedy to life on computer, it's turned out to be just about as successful as any previous game adaptation.

Core Design (who also produced the excellent *Rick Dangerous 2*, reviewed on page 57) could have tried to come up with some completely over the top humour, and would probably have failed miserably in the process, but

instead it's combined elements of some of the better-known sketches in what's basically a shoot 'em up with bells on.

The star of this show is Gumby, complete with knitted tank top, knotted scarf and fish's body (!),

who searches four levels of arcade action in search of the missing pieces of his brain.

Armed with an unlimited supply of 'throwing fish', his aim is to fight his way along, collecting tins of Spam (which appear from time to time). A piece of brain is handed over in exchange for 16 or more tins of Spam once a level is completed.

In his way stands the Spanish Inquisition, a number of dead parrots (but of course) and the occasional argument (no it doesn't, yes it does... and so on).

Amazingly, the program manages to capture a good deal of the essence of Python humour - which is more than a thousand human imitators have managed. This is probably because the graphics manage to recreate Terry Gilliam's best work, both in style and



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CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	X	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
Roland	X	AdLib	X

content (and for once, it doesn't really matter if you only have access to CGA).

But it's not only the graphics that convey the humour: the action occasionally breaks for a quick spot of tree recognition (number four - the larch), and for other surprises that you're better off discovering for yourself.

If it's just an enjoyable shoot 'em up you're after then this one would fit the bill even without the Python tie-in: however, if you were to accuse all parts of the British Navy of cannibalism... now stop that... it's silly!

☆☆☆

Ciaran Brennan

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RICK DANGEROUS 2

Was it only a year ago that Rick Dangerous first laughed in the face of adversity? Did I really spend the best part of that year helping the diminutive yet fearless adventurer in his quest to defeat the Goolu tribe and outwit the fiendish Nazi empire? Was that simple flick-screen tale of platforms, pistols and dynamite probably the best computer game of 1989? And was its hero really the new Indiana Jones?

The answer to all of these is yes... except for the last one. The first adventure may have seen our hero decked out in a felt hat and leather jacket, but this outfit was in fact nothing more than a cunning disguise, designed to hide his true identity.

How do we know this? Because right at the start of this second adventure, Rick is struck by a stray laser bolt which removes his outer clothing and reveals his true self - he's not Indiana Jones... he's Flash Gordon!

Worry not, Rick fans, the change in attire doesn't signal a new departure in the gameplay.

Instead it simply allows the plot to take a science-fiction twist (with Rick arriving home in 1945 London to find Hyde Park being used as a parking lot for huge alien spaceships) and gives the boy a chance to try out some new weapons, including sliding space mines and a neat little laser-bolt gun.

Rick Dangerous

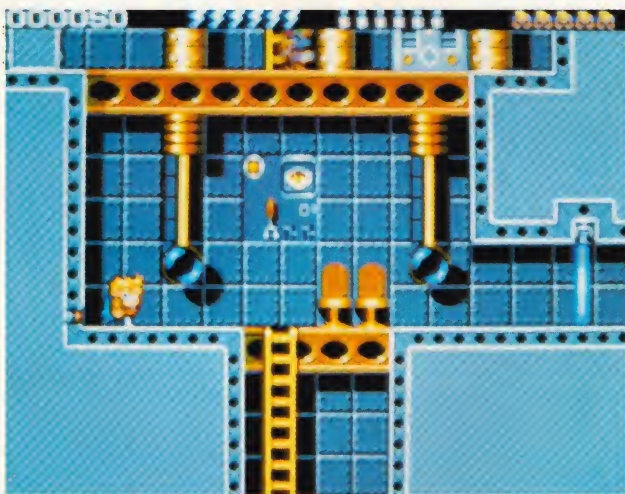
2 is a platform-based arcade adventure game featuring a tough, resourceful main character battling his way through four levels of adversity to face his arch-enemy, the Fat Man. The arcade adventure tag means that Rick doesn't only have to shoot his way past the corpulent dictator's numerous guards and obstacles, he also has to pit his

wits against an almost unending series of brain-stretching puzzles and traps.

What makes this particular example of the genre better than most of its contemporaries is that the puzzles aren't only clever, they're also all completely solvable in isolation: there's never a moment where you get to a certain point only to find that your progress has come to a standstill because you didn't collect a certain object or perform a certain task along the way.

Almost every screen presents a new challenge, and (once again, as in the original) skills picked up in solving the easier earlier puzzles invariably come into play when the going gets really tough later on.

As mentioned, Rick's troubles begin with the invasion of London by giant alien spaceships. Fearlessly, our hero enters the first of these and battles his way up and across (and sometimes back down again) in an effort to ultimately take control of the beast.



Remote-controlled guard robots and laser defences block the way, but the former are easily taken care of, while the latter can be switched off by punching the switches which you soon come to recognise planted in the ship's walls (Rick has lost the pointed stick which he carried in the first game, but has now developed the



ability to punch and kick). Be warned however, some of those switches don't have quite the effect you'd expect them to have - in fact, they can backfire quite painfully.

Finish the level and Rick takes off in the spaceship - only to crash land on the frozen planet of

Freezia, whose barren snowscapes provide similar action to that found on the spaceship, only this time with an icier tone. Similar linking scenes take our hero to Levels Three (the forest kingdom of Vegetabilia), Four (the Atomic Mud Mines) and Five (the Fat Man's orbiting palace).

Hidden rooms are dotted about each of these levels: we won't say where they are, as half the fun is in finding them. However, they are worth looking for, because they can (and often do) contain hidden booty such as extra ammunition or bonus points.

The differences between this and Rick's first outing can't really be described as improvements - mostly because there was very lit-

tle in the original which actually needed improving: for want of a better word let's call them refinements. I'm sure that most fans of the first game would have been more than happy with just a little bit more of the same - the refinements are therefore a bonus and bring this outing just that little closer to perfection (the boys at Core Design can give themselves a hearty pat on the back from me for their efforts).

Does all this sound a little bit over the top? Don't you believe it. Rick Dangerous 2 deserves every word of praise heaped on its broad shoulders, and if you've any fondness for arcade games and don't mind cracking a smile in the midst of the action, then this is a completely necessary addition to your software collection.

☆☆☆☆☆

Ciaran Brennan

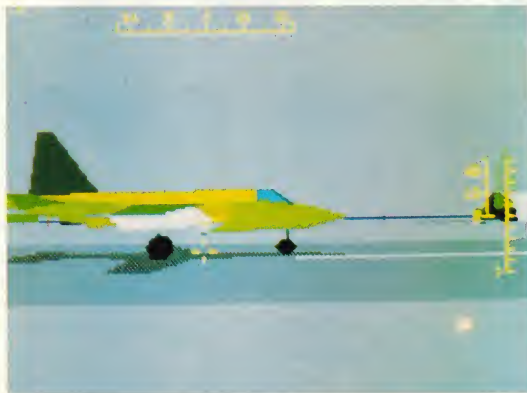
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STORMOVIK

SU-25 SOVIET ATTACK FIGHTER



If the MiG-29 and SU-27 are the Soviet equivalents of the F-16 and F-15 respectively, then the SU-25 is very similar to the F-111, or perhaps the ground attack version of the Panavia Tornado.

Created during the mid-'70s by Vladimir P Babak of the Sukhoi Design Bureau, the SU-25 can carry one of the largest tactical weapons loads of any aircraft in the world, short of strategic bombers.

This is due to its enormous wingspan (14.85 metres) which has no fewer than 10 'hardpoints' (or weapons pylons), all of which can carry a variety of bombs, rockets and anti-tank missiles. On the wingtips a couple of AA-2s (the Soviet answer to the heat-seeking Sidewinder) are attached for air-to air combat or, if you reach a high enough rank, they'll give you some AA-8s (the Soviet answer to the AMRAAM radar-guided missile).

The aircraft's other USPs are its ability to withstand punishment and its incredible manoeuvrability at low altitudes and low speeds. Featuring thick armour-plating (27mm of titanium in places),

heavy mechanical linkages and hydraulic flight control systems rather than the high-tech but fragile electronic fly-by-wire systems found on many Western aircraft, the SU-25 is one bird that's hard to

bring down - which is something you'll be glad of when you take the controls.

Its ability to turn and twist sharply at low speeds and low altitudes is essential against fighter aircraft. At higher speeds and altitudes it doesn't stand a chance, but at low speeds it can out-turn most fighters, or by flying as slowly as possible, wait until the fighter flies past and then plant a heat-seeker up his exhausts.

This simulation of the SU-25 is a surprising package in a number of ways. It's surprising that they chose a machine as unglamorous as this for the first Soviet military aircraft simulation when the specifications and capabilities of the MiG-29 and SU-27 are well known. It's also surprising that they were able to garner enough data about this aircraft to have a simulation ready by now: someone, somewhere has a pal in high places in NATO, the USAF or even, perhaps, the CIA.

The other major surprise is that the graphics are fairly lamentable, reminiscent of Spectrum HoloByte's *Falcon AT* or Digital

Integration's *F-16 Combat Pilot*, both of which are beginning to look a bit long in the tooth. You'd expect any new package to at least match the standard set by MicroProse's *F-15 Strike Eagle II*. This one doesn't.

In every other way, however, this is a good package. The action takes place during 1991, 1992 and 1993 when a growing number of rebel NATO and Warsaw Pact units begin attacking military installations. They're led by industrialists and military big-wigs with vested interests in the defence business who are none too

pleased that the good old, high-spending days of the Cold War are over and they're keen to scupper the disarmament process by sowing the seeds of suspicion and distrust. It's against this bunch of renegades that you do most of your fighting, starting with small skirmishes which lead to full-scale war by 1993.

It may not be a very plausible story, but it works nicely in this context, and gives you the chance to take on the full gamut of military hardware from both sides of what used to be the great divide. It's a tough nut to crack as well, and the difficulty of controlling a 25-ton airplane over the battlezone while at the same time trying to hit the target and avoid

getting hit yourself is well recreated.

There are some unusual touches. You get to take on armoured helicopters, for instance, which are almost impossible to shake off once they latch on to your tail (the beat of the chopper's rotors is well executed: in fact the sound is excellent throughout, especially when played through Creative Labs' Sound Blaster card). Another nice touch is the bullet hole which appears in the cockpit canopy if you yourself are hit.

Each simulated year contains about 10 different missions which



grow increasingly difficult. This number may be a bit limited, but I've had no problems since I keep getting killed in 1992. Medals, promotion and points are awarded in the usual fashion.

Generally, this simulation is as exciting and challenging as any I have played. With better graphics, it could have been a contender for my all time top three. It was that close...

☆☆☆

Declan McColgan

Since the ending of the Cold War, Soviet military hardware has become very fashionable - particularly its fighter jets.

The biggest crowd pleasers at Western air shows these days are the MiG-29 Fulcrum and, lately, the astonishing SU-27 Flanker which performs the incredible manoeuvre of pulling its nose up to the vertical, then about 10 degrees beyond, coming to a complete standstill in the process, and hanging there motionless for several seconds before dropping its snout again and whizzing off.

No Western aircraft can match this party piece, and the impression this has made with Western military aviators is reflected in the fact that the Red Arrows have named their latest nine-aircraft formation

OUT-FLANKED

two leading aircraft mags, *Flight International* and *Aviation Week*, have been tripping over each other in their attempts to actually review the SU-27 and MiG-29. Both have now done so although, naturally, they weren't allowed to learn anything about their weapons systems. Nonetheless, both concluded, in their reserved and understated ways, that on balance it was probably a good thing that Cold War never actually warmed up, as many an F-15 or F-16 which encountered either of these machines would have been sent packing with a scalded backside.

'Flanker', and now include this manoeuvre in all of their displays.

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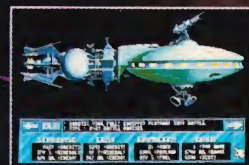
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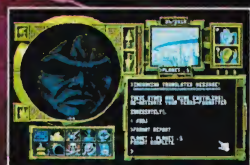
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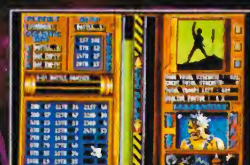
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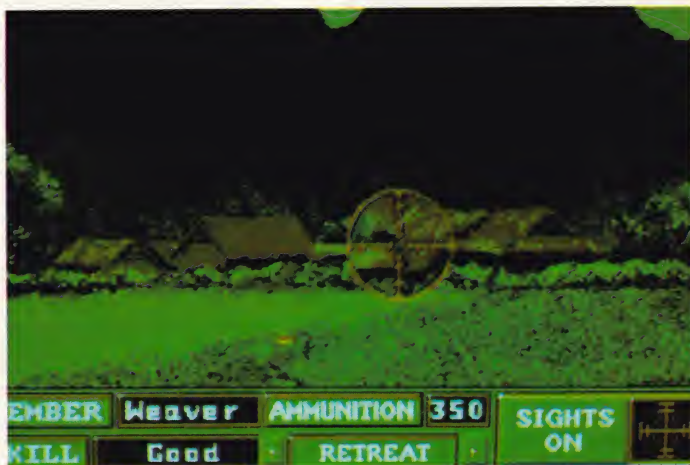
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THE LOST PATROL

Things could be worse... but not much. Only 10 minutes ago you were on your way back to base following a routine patrol over enemy territory and now half the platoon's dead and there's 58 miles of enemy-infested jungle between you and safety.

Ocean's 'Cinemaware-style' adventure casts you as platoon leader Weaver, a relatively inexperienced soldier who's well and truly been dumped in at the deep end. Taking stock of the situation, you realise that there's nothing for it but to attempt to make it through the hostile terrain with your six squad members in tow.

In effect, this means that you have to pick your way across a single-screen relief map of your vicinity, taking care to avoid the more dangerous natural obstacles and, of course, the enemy.

That's right, the enemy - you'd almost forgotten about them hadn't you? The Viet Cong makes its presence felt in a number of sub-games,

which can involve anything from taking out a lone sniper to holding back a whole regiment of kamikaze infantrymen - there's even a minefield to be negotiated.

You can lay traps, such as Claymore mines, to keep the Gooks at bay, but sooner or later (and probably sooner) you're going to come into contact with some enemy activity.

Other elements, such as the health and strength of your soldiers and the friendliness (or otherwise) of the natives, have to be taken into account - it's up to you to decide when and where the patrol eats, sleeps and makes tracks.

All of these elements are nicely linked, and the action tends to move quite smoothly (except, of course, if you're playing off floppy, in which case the swapping from disk to disk soon begins to wear on the nerves - installing on the hard one is highly recommended). The trouble is, the sub-games are all too limited. They very quickly lose their challenge, and the trek eventually becomes a chore rather than an entertaining or challenging experience.

Ocean has come quite close with this, which after all was its first attempt at a game of this type. However, the whole never quite equals the sum of its parts - and even the parts don't continue to entertain for very long.

Put it down as a missed opportunity.

☆☆☆

Jimmy Taylor

CRASH COURSE

With Atari's *Hard Drivin'* coin-op being such a big hit on both sides of the pond, it was inevitable that a whole series of clones would soon be making an appearance. *Crash Course* (called *Stunt Driver* in its American incarnation) is the first of these, and in many respects it's a very worthy opponent for the original.

Following the vogue for most recent 3D games, *Crash Course* offers the usual remote camera, and 'over the shoulder views' - although switching these on while taking a sharp corner at speed isn't recommended.

Hard Drivin' offered two tracks - *Stunt* and *Speed* - but this program goes three better, offering five courses: from the simple *Training Oval* right through to the deadly *Sidewinder*, complete with hairpin bends, loop, bridge and a jump. And even if you manage to master all of these, you can always resort to the comprehensive track construction editor which has all the necessary bits and pieces ready to be simply slotted into place on a grid - nice and easy.

Another *Crash Course* option is the facility to actually race against one of three different opponents on any track. The other drivers, Ethel 'Grandma' Moezes, Blake 'Shyster' Fishwater, and Jimmy 'Skid' Rowe, have distinctive styles, so different tactics are required to beat them. Once again, obsolescence is built out by the inclusion of a 'Head-to-Head' option by which two machines can be linked up via the Serial port so you can play against a

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friend.

The only thing that really lets *Crash Course* down is the car's handling, which, thinking about it, is pretty major really. One of *Hard Drivin'*'s best features was the realistic turning and acceleration, but *Crash Course* suffers from over-sensitive steering. To be fair, there is a bar in the options panel that allows the sensitivity to be adjusted, but this wasn't as effective as it could have been. I'm sure that a little perseverance will result in most players eventually overcoming this problem, but it will be frustrating for the beginner.

If you're looking for a racing simulation with a little more depth than *Hard Drivin'*, and you just can't wait for the conversions of Atari's forthcoming *Race Drivin'* coin-op, then *Crash Course* is probably worth a look, but be prepared to spend some time adjusting to its idiosyncratic controls.

☆☆☆

Laurence Scotford

Ocean

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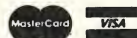
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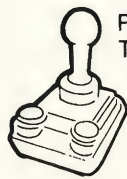



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BLADE WARRIOR

This is one of those games that is full of great ideas but in the end just doesn't quite come together. Although it's loosely based on the role-playing mystic-quest type of concept, its implementation is actually closer to that of an arcade game.

The eponymous Blade Warrior does battle with the forces of the night, as the evil Murk has sent his creatures to banish light from the Land forever.

To help in this task, old 'Blade' carries his trusty sword and has access to a number of spells. However, before any of this magic can be used, the Warrior must obtain the necessary ingredients and mixing ratios. The ingredients can be found lying around on the floor of the land, while the ratios and instructions have to be bought from Wizards.

Wizards live in towers scattered about the land. They're notoriously sulky sorts and need to be wooed. The best policy is to collect as many useful objects on your way, and trade these for what you need. It's useful to note that each Wizard has a favourite object.



While all of this trading and spell casting is vital, the bulk of the game consists of wandering around the map killing Murk's minions, which vary from insignificant spiders through werewolves and vampires to mummies and banshees.

Graphically, *Blade Warrior* is excellent. Since all the action takes place at night, the whole world appears in silhouette and thus scores lots of points for

atmosphere. Better still, if your machine has enough memory, you can select the smooth scroll option which enhances things further. In fact, the attention to detail is superb throughout - the map and the inventory screen look genuinely especially good.

However, the fighting routine is far from brilliant. Using Fire and a direction key causes Blade Warrior to hack or slash in a particular direction. Which direction isn't

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5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	X	Hercules	✓
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	X

really important, as your opponent generally expires or departs after a couple of strokes.

Mainly because of this, you don't really care whether Blade Warrior succeeds in his mission or not. The gameplay fails to grip and isn't really that exciting. True, the graphics are nice, but the game itself lacks depth. Perhaps with a slightly more original plot the same routines and style could be used to produce a better game. But then, perhaps not.

☆☆

Jim Douglas

SHUFFLEPUCK CAFE

Broderbund

(081) 780 2222

£24.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	X	Hercules	✓
Mouse	X	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	X

If they were playing a pub game in the bar scene in *Star Wars* it would probably have been shufflepuck, an intergalactic diversion halfway between shove ha'penny and air hockey.

One of the first rules of computer gaming seems to be that even the simplest game deserves a background story, so here it is... you are a salesman on the way to score the biggest deal of your life when your transport breaks down. All you need to do is get to a

phone to call in the intergalactic AA, but to get to the phone you have to make your way through an array of shufflepuck players intent on taking on all-comers.

What this means is taking on nine opponents of varying skills, abilities and appearances: each of which has his, her or its own peculiarities.

Some have special moves or shots that you'll have to get used to before you beat them. The Princess Bejin, for example, serves by lifting her hand and manoeuvring the puck towards the centre of the table, before suddenly catapulting it to the left or right. Cheating, I think it's called, but it's not too hard to suss out which way it's going.

The game itself couldn't be more straightforward, in fact come to think of it, it could even be a bit less so. The two players face each other across the table and belt the puck back and forth in an attempt to pass the other's bat. Succeed, and there's a nice tinkling of glass as a pane

between your opponent and the table shatters under the impact. A little electronic marker then chalks up a point on the board - first to 15 wins.

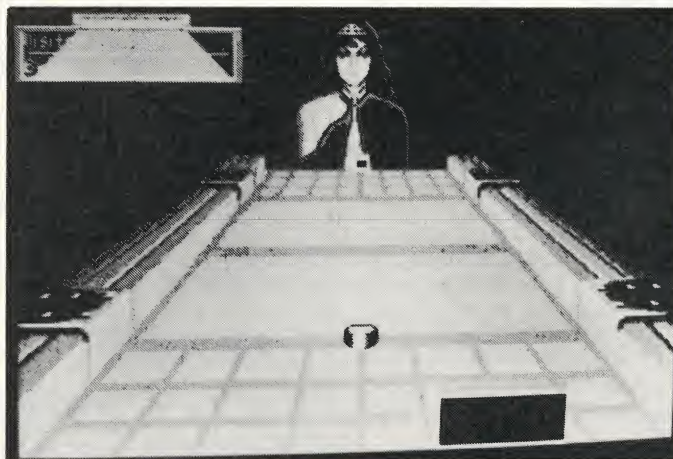
And that's really all there is to it. You can change the parameters by altering the paddle size and speed, and if you have the measure of most of the opponents (and the majority are pretty easy) you can program a droid to be as

tough a challenge as you like. Whatever you do, the game remains the same, and because for some reason you're denied the opportunity of playing a two-person game, a human element is missing.

Shufflepuck Cafe is good, simple, arcade fun, but it really needs something else to make it an essential purchase.

☆☆☆

Mike Pattenden



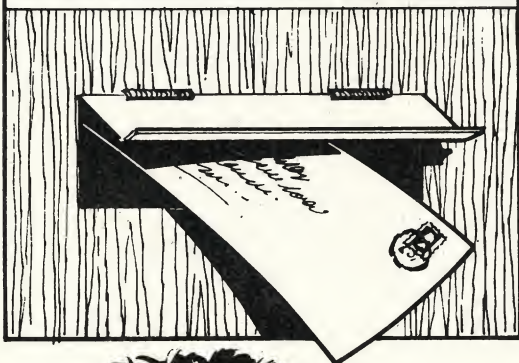
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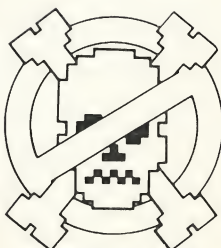
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INTERPHASE

In this 'Cyberpunk' adventure tale, you take on the role of Chad, a character in a fictional future where the leisure industry is given over to producing Dream Tracks: recorded realities which allow the viewer to investigate imagined worlds. It's not all fiction folks, this type of technology is already under development and goes by the name of Virtual Reality - *Interphase* is one of the first games to pick up on the concept (even if it can't actually utilise it).

But back to the game...

Chad himself is a Dreamer, a psychic programmer who creates these realities which act as a fix for the population. However, when he discovers that one of his tracks has been laced with subliminal messages capable of destroying the minds of anyone who experiences it, he sets out with his partner, Kaf-E, to destroy the track.

Using these two characters, the game divides neatly to cover two closely integrated elements. Kaf-E has the responsibility of penetrating the DreamTrack building, whilst Chad guides her through its com-

plex security system by hacking into the computer and heading off any problems.

The two communicate via an interface known, funnily enough, as *Interphase* - in practice this means that you can switch between the two as the game progresses. A blueprint shows how far into the 12-floor office Kaf-E has penetrated, while an abstract 3D environment repre-

sents the computer - it's in this section that most of the real action is centred.

Inside the computer, geometric shapes represent items such as surveillance cameras and doors - all of which can be manipulated. Kaf-E leaves messages whenever she comes to an obstacle and Chad can destroy things by clicking onto the 'Navcom' icon and following the arrows which reveal



Image Works

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5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
Roland	X	AdLib	✓

the object's whereabouts in the computer.

The building's floors are connected via tunnels with energy-sapping walls, steering must therefore be accurate. The computer is also protected internally by fighter-like darts which attack you as you manoeuvre around it. If you run out of energy the game ends, as it does if Kaf-E is killed making her way through the building.

Interphase unfolds into an absorbing game which cleverly balances the two areas of gameplay. That the game lifts a segment almost completely from William Gibson's cyberpunk classic for its inspiration doesn't really matter - one day its programmers won't have to do it quite so literally.

☆☆☆

Mike Pattenden

ISHIDO - THE WAY OF STONES

Do you really fancy playing a game originally called Runa Futhark by the ancient Celts? Well here's your chance, as the passion for PC puzzle titles takes another twist this month with the release of *Ishido - The Way Of Stones*.

Based on an ancient board game, *Ishido* has two players attempting to match stones according to their colour and pattern. The game can be played by two human players or by one against the computer (you can even set the com-

puter vs computer to reveal its strategies).

The *Ishido* stones come in sets of 72, each with a colour and symbol attribute. The game starts with a board with six unique stones and a pouch containing randomly-ordered stones. When placing stones next to each other on the board you must match either their symbol or colour. The match cannot be diagonal.

To legally place a stone next to two other stones, your

stone must match one stone with the colour attribute and the second stone with the symbol attribute. With a three-way match you have to match two of the stones with one attribute and the third stone with the second attribute. Once you're proficient with *Ishido*, you'll be able to create four-way matches.

Ishido can be played in a Modern or Ancient way, each uses an individual system for

scoring and requires a different strategy. With Ancient *Ishido* you must empty the pouch and try to create as many four-ways as possible. Modern *Ishido* has you trying to score the highest number of points.

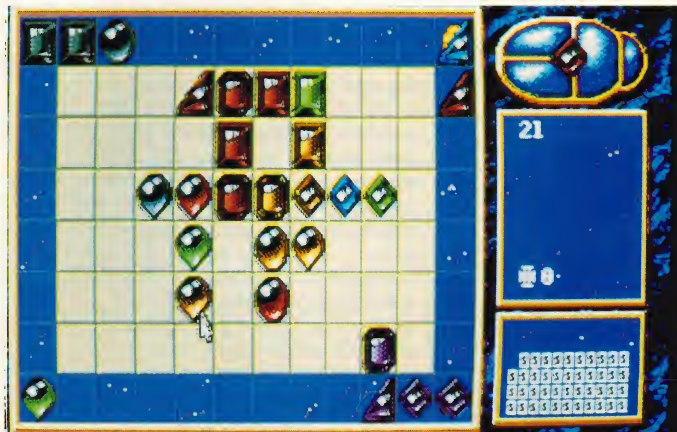
These two variations are augmented by Solitaire, Challenge and Tournament modes of play. And the miracle of micro play lets you show possible moves and undo moves if you don't like them - you can even consult an Oracle during the game to answer your questions.

Aesthetics are very low key here. After all, how do you jazz up a stone-based board game? All the graphics modes are supported though, and the game is slightly more playable in EGA and VGA - as the colours and symbols are easier to identify.

Ishido should please the die-hard strategist - but it doesn't supply the adrenalin rush that comes from *Tetris* or *Pipe Mania*.

☆☆☆

Rik Haynes



Accolade

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5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	✓
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	X

BATMAN - THE MOVIE

I don't know whether I love or hate the first level of this one. It's so infuriating that it occasionally gives me an incredible urge to punch the screen through the wall.

Actually, this isn't quite as bad as it sounds. Batman's journey through the Axis chemical factory is visually excellent: moody lighting, evil baddies in trenchcoats, Batman himself in his flowing cape. Everything looks the part, but elements of this stage feel more like a patience test than entertainment.

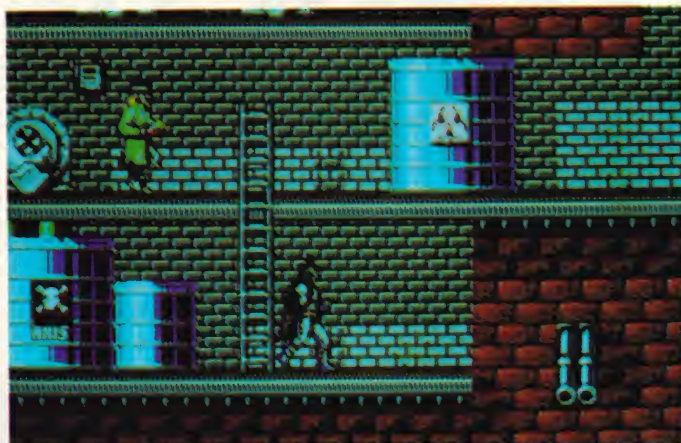
The aim is to reach the top right-hand corner of the facto-

ry and shoot Jack Napier with a Bat-a-rang, knocking him into a vat of chemicals from which he emerges as the Joker.

Bad guys can be dispatched either by jumping on top of them or hitting them with the Bat-a-rang. However, this weapon is useless whenever Batman is outnumbered, since he's quite slow on the draw. The result is that our hero does more running away than stand-up fighting.

Competent use of the bat-rope is vital if you hope to succeed. By shooting the rope up toward a platform and then using it to climb, Batman can progress swiftly through the level. At least, that's the plan. Since it's necessary to hold down three keys at a time to shoot the rope diagonally, it's often simply unsuccessful.

Anyhow, assuming that you get through Level One. You're then faced with the task of guiding the Batmobile through the streets of Gotham City, avoiding traffic but maintaining a high enough speed to escape the pursuing Joker. This stage looks quite wonky



in places: the cars look comic, the buildings' perspective seems unnatural and some of the atmosphere is lost.

Level Three's Batcave offers an element of puzzling: Batman must identify three items spiked with Joker's deadly Smilex chemical before the rapidly disappearing time limit expires.

Level Four is another 3D affair, this time placing Batman at the controls of the Batwing, flying along the streets of Gotham City cutting the ropes which anchor bal-

loons filled with Smilex.

The final Level, The Cathedral, is similar to stage one, but the hazards this time are rats and crumbling floors.

And there you have it. It may sound like a lot's on offer, but this is a curiously patchy package. Certain elements are gripping, while the others are either too simple, or just too uninteresting to make it worth your while to reach them. An ultimately disappointing film tie-in.

☆☆☆

Jim Douglas

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5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	X	Tandy	✓
Mouse	X	Joystick	✓
Roland	X	AdLib	X

NIGHT SHIFT

This little cutie from Lucasfilm is something of a departure for the multi-armed giant, straying as it does from the company's roots in adventure games and flight simulations. However, it does make good use of the company's stock in trade, that is, the characters from some of the bigger movies that old George (and his special effects company, Industrial Light And Magic) has

been involved with.

An animated cartoon caper, *Night Shift* sees you don the dusty dungarees of Fred Fixit (or Fiona if you prefer, there's no sexism here), an employee of Industrial Might And Logic (chortle), a company which manufactures dolls of some of Lucasfilm's more famous creations: Luke Skywalkers, Imperial Stormtroopers and so on.

The idea, in a nutshell, is that

you get the presses running, sort out any problems that may occur (more about them later) and churn out enough of the specified dolls to keep Frank Foreman happy, and thus keep yourself gainfully employed.

Industrial Might And Logic's sole piece of machinery is a multi-screen beast which rises upwards and is scaled by means of jumping from ladder to ladder to conveyor belt to lift - in fact almost anything, moving or stationary, can be used to aid your progress.

The whole thing is powered by a sole bicycle (!) and seemingly held together by rust and chewing gum, so constant running repairs are necessary... but first you have to find out what's broken.

A number of events and creatures conspire to put a stop to your model building: the latter category includes Larry The Lawyer, who attempts to serve you with a writ for the company's breach of the safety laws, and a

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VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	✓

family of gremlins who spill paint, trip switches and so on.

Success is rewarded with huge cash bonuses and is reflected in the state of the house which you return to: this homecoming scene is yet another example of the humour involved and the genuine good nature of the program.

It was quite brave of Lucasfilm to produce such a major departure as this, but it's pulled it off quite successfully. Some may find the simple gameplay a little too limited, while others may simply think that the whole affair is too childish: but if you've got any youth left in your bones then you won't go far wrong with this one.

☆☆☆☆

Ciaran Brennan



WELLTRIS

What's the key to designing a truly great arcade puzzle game? It seems to lie in achieving a fine balance between speed and thought: it can't either be too involved or too easy to beat. If I was asked to name a game which achieved this balance perfectly, it would have to be *Tetris* - however due to corporate politics, this classic is unfortunately no longer available to PC users.

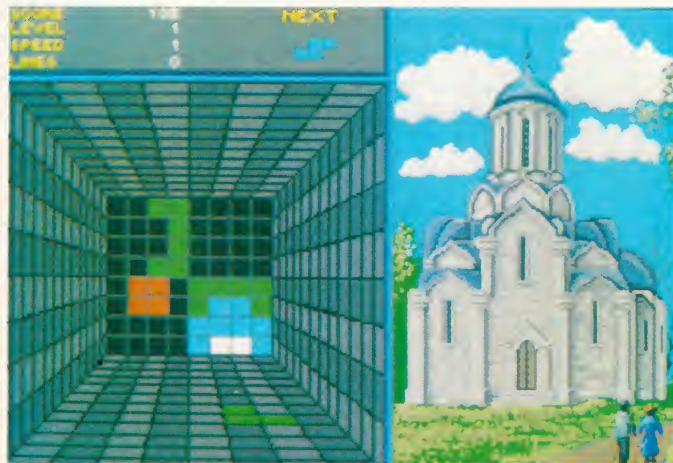
Welltris at least offers PC gamers the chance to play the sequel. It's programmed by the same Soviet

mathematician, Alexey Pajinitov, who came up with the original geometric tumbler. He's a man who should be far too rich to ever have to work again, but so far he's probably only received a couple of cabbages and a bottle of potato vodka for his first effort.

It's no surprise to find that *Welltris* picks up where *Tetris* left off, and develops the geometric challenge of the original, though ironically it's very much along the lines of recent clones like *Rainbow Arts' Blockout*, which attempted to enhance the original design by adding another dimension.

Once again the object of the exercise is to manipulate falling shapes, but this time you view the game in three dimensions from above, so the playing area appears as a well (hence the name).

Unlike *Blockout* though, the pieces do not build up as you fail to fill the entire surface area - curiously the actual play area remains almost two dimensional, and all you have to do is form a horizontal or vertical line. If you



run out of room, subsequent pieces stack up along the side, which then changes colour stopping you from manipulating subsequent pieces along that side. With three sides out of action, you've pretty well had it.

So is *Welltris* going to take the world by storm in the same way that its predecessor did? I think not. While it's simple enough to

get the hang of, *Welltris* just doesn't grab you, perhaps because it requires a little too much thought to play at speed. Whatever the reason, *Welltris* simply fails to follow in the footsteps of its illustrious predecessor - perhaps *Tetris* really is too hard an act to follow after all.

☆☆☆

Mike Pattenden

Infogrames
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£24.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	X	Hercules	X
Mouse	X	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	X

SHARKEY'S 3D POOL

Many 3D games, it must be said, are little more than graphically exciting re-workings of tried and tested formulas: their new graphics at best offering some short-term novelty value. Thankfully, this isn't true in this case.

Here the 3D screen representation, coupled with the facility to wander around the table, gives a realistic feel to the game which has been noticeably lacking in previous pool offerings.

Some effort has also been made to make the game feel like a sleazy evening on the tables - you play for money in places with glamorous names like Linda's Pool Hall. The characters inhabiting the halls are blessed with varying levels of pool prowess, but they all look like they share an equal need of a good scrubbing.

This dingy scene-setting is actually a little incongruous with the ultra neat and tidy

polygon table and balls and control, but nevertheless, it adds a little atmosphere.

A view of the table is on screen at all times during play. By holding down the left mouse button and dragging,

the table is rotated about its vertical and horizontal axes. This gives a truly realistic view of the proceedings and allows genuine pool ability (or luck) to win through.

This is actually much more sporting than having players hold a ruler up to the screen to check if their shots are going to work (a two-dimensional bird's-eye view is available for shots requiring extra precision).

Shooting the cue ball is pretty accurate. It can be struck at any point, with any strength. Both factors are controlled by icons. The direction of the shot is indicated by a blue line and can be tweaked either by mouse dragging or clicking on a left/right icon.

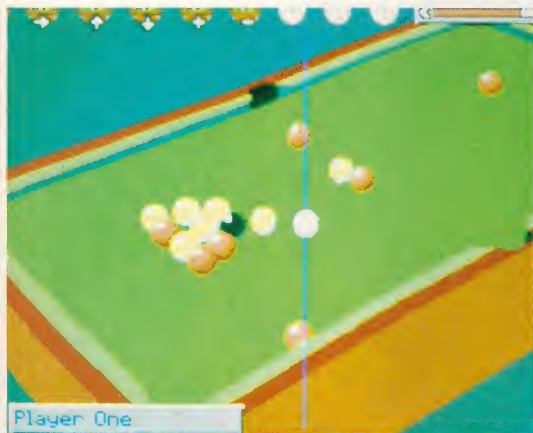
Trick (or just plain practice) shots can be set up in any manner desired by nominating and then moving balls around the table. Once the shot has been set up, it can then be attempted, undone and retried if necessary. Use of this section will lead to a better understanding of - titter ye not - ball behaviour.

In the tournament, each player lines up in turn and endeavours to fight their way through to the grand final. Simply winning through to a semi-final position can be pretty tough if the computer-controlled players are on form.

Although *Sharkey's 3D Pool* doesn't only look and move impressively, it's also a proficient and entertaining sports simulation with genuinely useful 3D graphics.

☆☆☆☆

Jim Douglas

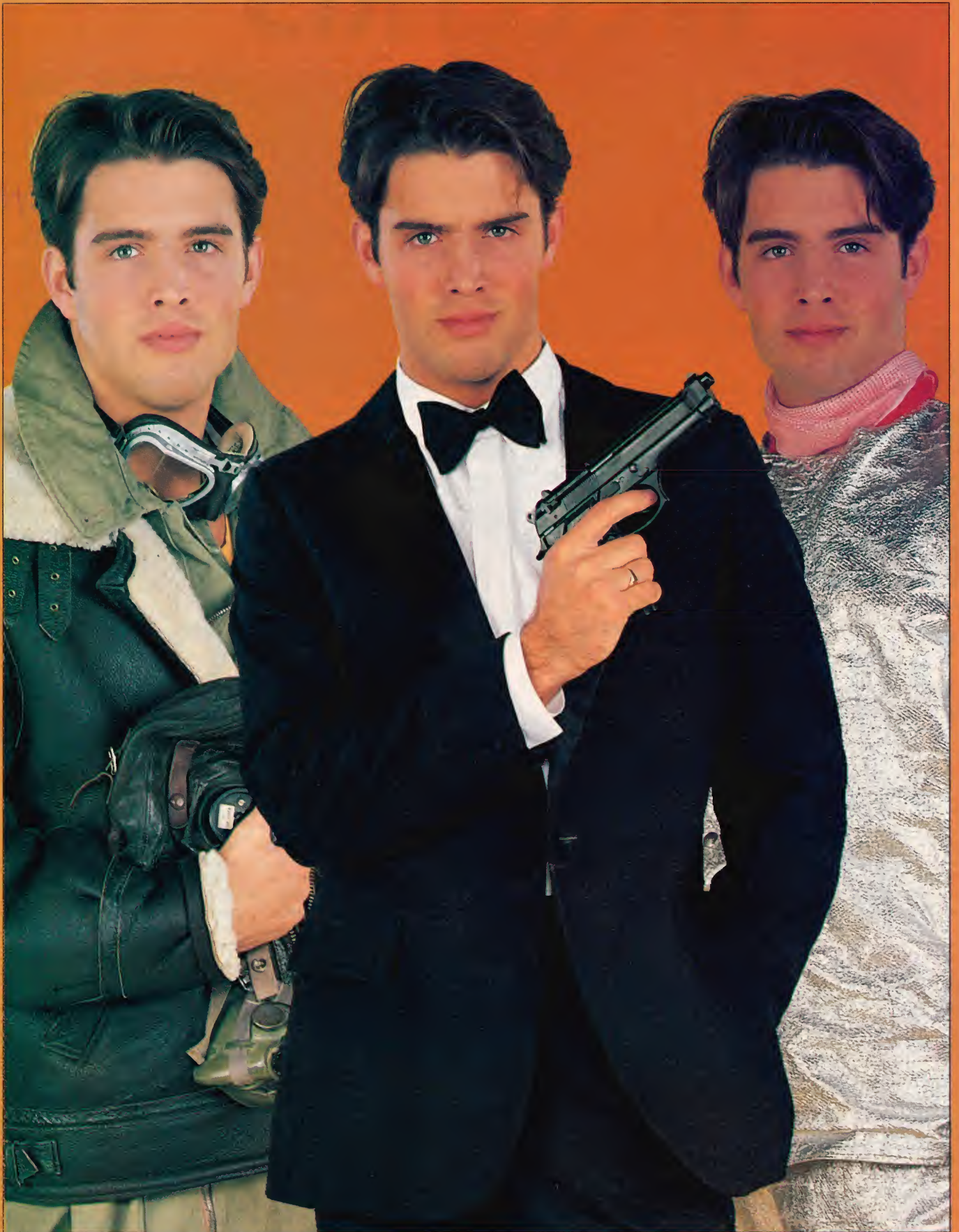


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5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	X	Hercules	✓
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	X

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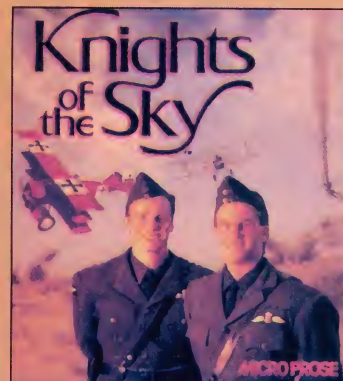
The date is 1914, and you are a British, American or French flying ace of World War I, attempting to take out Axis pilots in hair-raising dogfights and shoot down Zeppelins before they can cross the channel. "Knights of the Sky" is historically accurate, allowing you to use more sophisticated and powerful aircraft as you move towards 1918, navigating by map and compass, just like the real aerial combat pioneers of seventy five years ago. You can even end up challenging the the best hot-shot pilots that Germany could put into the air, such as Oswald Boelcke, Max Immelman, or even the great Baron von Richtofen, the Red Baron himself. "Knights of the Sky" features MicroProse's acclaimed 3D graphics system, further enhanced and improved, taking the flight sim genre into a whole new era. Available initially on IBM PC compatible machines, Atari ST and Commodore Amiga versions will follow shortly.

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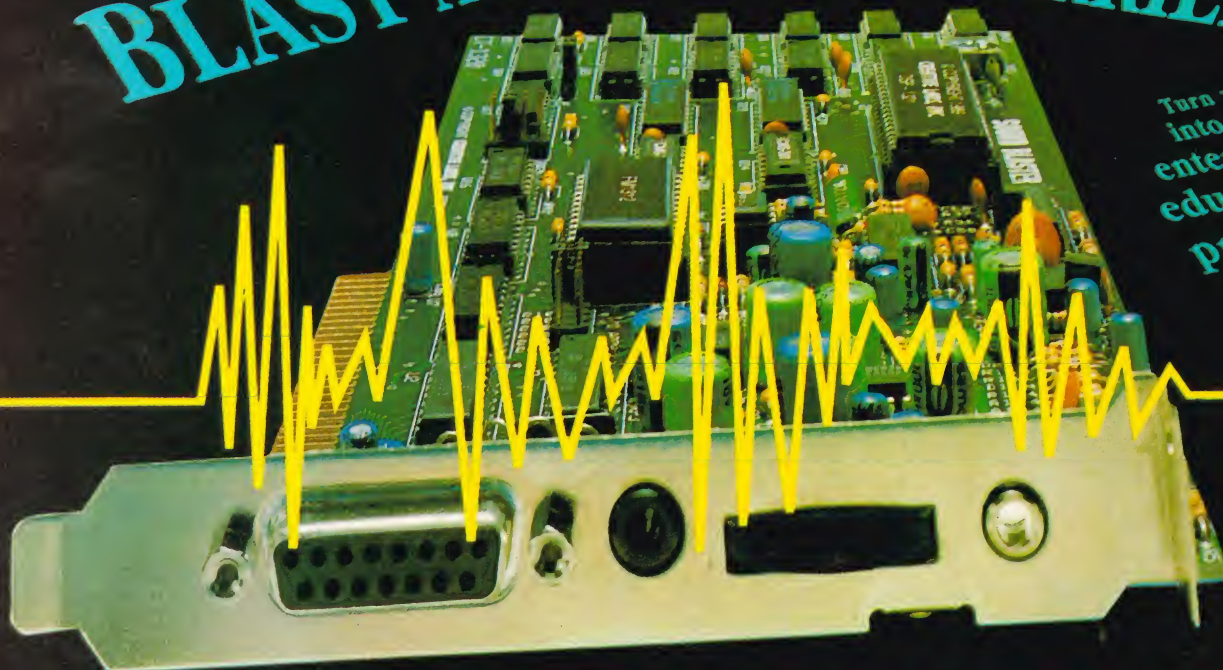
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ELITE PLUS

In space, no one can hear you trade. Okay, it's not the most tense of catchphrases, but *Elite* was never intended to be a heart-in-the-mouth gutbuster. For a game that first appeared on the prehistoric BBC computer some six years ago, it still remains remarkably well-rounded and enjoyable - which only goes to show how revolutionary it was for its day.

Like all previous versions, this offers the player the chance to

live out a true alter-ego lifestyle in space - the only difference is that in this case the sound and vision have been enhanced.

At the start of the game, default Commander Jameson starts with a clean police record, a rating of 'Harmless', 100 credits and a Cobra Mk III ship. He is docked on the space station orbiting Lave.

The overall objective is to achieve Elite status, by demonstrating excellence in all areas: combat, trading, piloting your ship and general space-smarts. Well respected pilots are occasionally called upon to carry out secret missions for the Federation.

In the short

term, it's a reasonable objective to simply amass as many credits as possible. On technologically advanced planets they can buy tasty equipment for the Cobra, such as military lasers and missile jamming systems.

Once away from the womb-like security of the space station, you are prone to interest from other ships. Depending on the planet which you're visiting, there may be pirates in the vicinity, waiting to scoop those pricey luxury goods you're carrying.

The space battles are great fun. The complete antithesis of the strategic trading sections, they really make the game live. Dogfights with pirates can lead to bounty pay, but pirates seldom work alone...

Some things, though, never change: it can seem like a back-breaking task to make any real money. Deals which nearly cost you your life only yield a handful of credits, most of which you have to plough back into missiles (30 creds a time) or other repairs.

Perseverance, of course, pays off in the end. As the scale of your transactions increases, so does the profit. Once the early deals have been completed, you can really start to have some fun.

Elite is the tops. It's got enough strategy to keep you coming back for more and more enough action to keep an arcade freak happy until the early hours. An oldie but a real goodie.

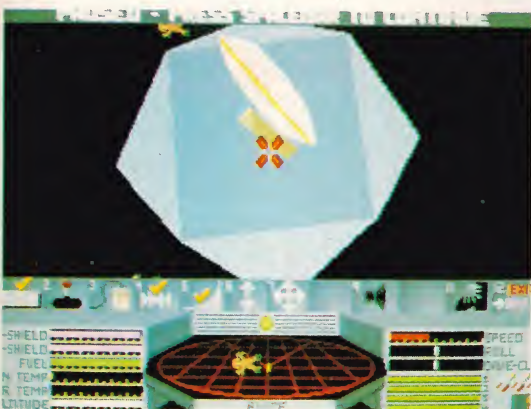
☆☆☆☆

Jim Douglas

Firebird
(0666) 504326

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5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
Roland	✓	AdLib	✓



MUDS

Well over a year ago, Rainbow Arts came up with an example of what's becoming more and more unusual of late - a simple and enjoyable new game concept.

The idea in fact couldn't have been more basic: all you had to do was kick a number of balls to your opponents end of a fixed screen before he did the same to you. However, the addition of a

fantasy scenario, an in-built sense of humour (the balls were actually living creatures who grimaced as you kicked them) and that magic 'Ingredient X' which keeps bringing you back for one more try made *Grand Monster Slam* a real winner.

MUDS is similar in many ways to that classic, but it's very different in many ways too. Once again we have a futuristic fantasy setting, but this time the single screen has gone to be replaced by a vast world with a number of cities and a game involving a plethora of strategy options.

Basically, you find yourself in charge of a team involved in the intergalactic game of *MUDS*: another game played with a living creature, but this time team-based.

Before you get anywhere close to actually competing you have to buy and sell players (at a slave market), fix



your team up with accommodation, health care and training facilities and generally keep morale high and the books balanced. It's even possible to swing the odds in your favour by bribing members of the opposition and even the ball!

The game itself is fairly simple, you throw the 'flonk' (the ball creature) into a basket which lies on the opposite side of a treacherous moat. The game is played until either all of the seven flonks have ended up in the baskets, or one team is no longer able to field enough players (due to the game's less than gentle

nature).

It may not have the simplicity or immediacy of *Grand Monster Slam*, but *MUDS* is a highly enjoyable game nonetheless. The set-up options are fun for those who want to get involved in them, while the actual game itself is highly entertaining and captivating.

While I would have a small degree of doubt as to how long you would enjoy a game of this type, there's enough humour and playability here to keep most players happy in the short term at least.

☆☆☆☆

Jimmy Taylor

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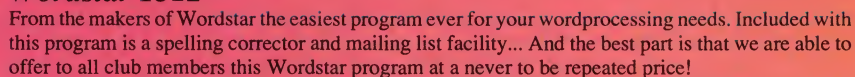


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INTERNATIONAL SOCCER CHALLENGE

The veritable tidal wave of soccer games which washed all over the entire range of home computers just prior to this Summer's World Cup somehow missed the PC. This is probably because most PC games are developed with one eye on the US market, and as we all know soccer currently generates about as much interest over there as Coronation Street.

That said, the games are slowly beginning to trickle through (there's news of the

impending release of both *Kick Off* and a new Gazza game elsewhere in this issue) and anyhow, soccer's still as popular as it was throughout June and July, so software publishers could be forgiven for believing that there's no great hurry.

MicroStyle's contribution to computer's first division promises a lot: the 'behind the player' three-dimensional view is unique among games of this type (soccer games are usually viewed from the side

or above), while the players' fluid and varied range of movements is a joy to behold.

The trouble is it doesn't really work.

A lot of trouble has obviously gone into making the whole shooting match as realistic as humanly possible. There are a number of practice modes which allow the player to perfect everything from straightforward passing to goalkeeping; there's a choice of competition between the World Cup or a 'Super League' and everything has accuracy stamped all over it.

The only thing that's missing is enjoyable playability. No amount of impressive graphical trickery can make the player enjoy a game where you can only see a few square yards of the pitch and where your movement within this space is greatly limited.

It's not even as if there is anything that the boffins at MicroStyle could do anything to put it right: current computer technology simply isn't ready to handle a game of this

type viewed from this angle with enough speed and variety to make it a worthwhile exercise.

Full marks to the design team for attempting to break the mould of computerised soccer and bring the true fan an accurate simulation of the world's favourite game. Maybe one day computer technology will catch up with this idea, but until then it's just a little ahead of its time.

☆☆☆

Ciaran Brennan



MicroStyle
(0666) 504326

£29.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	✓
Mouse	X	Joystick	✓
Roland	✓	AdLib	✓

TEAM YANKEE

Simulation buffs beware - this baby contains nothing remotely resembling the cockpit of a modern tank. Stranger still, its combat handling comes closer to a game of *Operation Wolf* than anything else, and the only technical back-up you get is a slim (but readable) manual which comprehensively covers the remarkably few essential functions to learn.

Oh, and it's highly playable.

All in all that makes it the most

accessible tank simulation released to date. Purists certainly won't like its style, but they can find blinking widgeits aplenty in the likes of MicroProse's *M1 Tank Platoon*.

Team Yankee is based on the novel of the same name by US Army major, Harold Coyle, which follows the exploits of one tank platoon, the eponymous Team Yankee, stationed on the now-defunct East-West German border at the start of World War III. The game's scenarios approximately follow those of the book, a paperback version of which is usefully included in the package. The objective is to survive each encounter with the Russian Invasion force and work your way up through the ranks.

There are four units under your control, each with a complement of four vehicles. Using a rather neat windowing system you can simultaneously monitor the action around all of these units or concentrate on just one.

Most of the tactical stuff is con-

ducted on the usual map display, which is clear, if a little uninspired graphically. You can also set up artillery support at the beginning of each mission, but, rather unrealistically, these commands cannot be rescinded or changed.

The 3D view is a combination of Polygons for buildings and landscapes and sprites for more detailed objects. The only problem with this objects often results in an image somewhat akin to the old Silk Cut cigarette adverts: colourful, but meaningless.

A superbly designed training mission is included to give the player a chance to get accustomed to all the aspects of the game. A single attempt at this dummy run should be all that is necessary to prove just how

easy Team Yankee is to play, and then tackling the game for real should present no major problems.

If you're looking for an in-depth and realistic simulation of modern tank warfare then there are far better offerings than this to be had. If, however, you want a playable tank game which doesn't require a higher degree in engineering, then look no further.

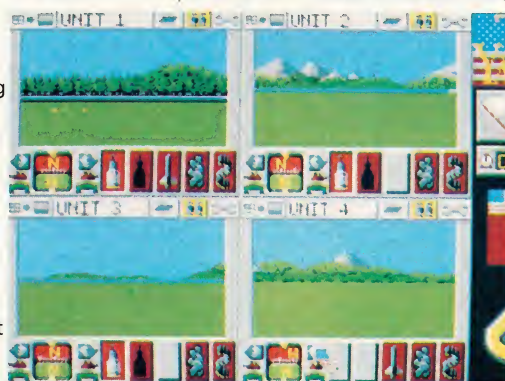
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VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
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VGA	✓	Hercules	✗
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
Roland	✗	AdLib	✓

Career conscious pirates, second-hand ship salesmen, blind lookout men and a talkative dog. All essential ingredients in every good pirate story, well for this one anyway.

Guybrush Threepwood wants to make his name as a mighty pirate (although changing it would probably be a better idea), so he sets off towards Melee Island to find a crew.

Having talked to some Important Looking Pirates at the local tavern he discovers that three trials have to be mastered to become a terror of the high seas. Mastering the arts of sword-play, thievery and treasure-hunting comprise the first part of Lucasfilm's latest - and best - graphic adventure.

The tale is split into three chapters, the first telling the story of Guybrush's attempts to become a pirate, the second concerning his journey to Monkey Island and the third about the island itself. As with Lucasfilm's previous title

Loom, it's designed to tell a complete story as opposed to giving a frustrating series of puzzles. Unlike *Loom*, what is offered is far more interactive and a lot more challenging. Lucasfilm is certainly a company that learns from (what some would argue are) its mistakes.

As ever with Lucasfilm's adventures, the humour shines through like a beacon. Take sword fighting for example: you enter the training school expecting to be taught the deadliest fighting moves known to man but instead learn that the secret to winning a duel is to out-insult your opponent. Every fight you get into from then on doesn't involve any complex number systems or fighting moves, but sees you slinging witty and cutting remarks about your opponent's abilities in order to disarm him.

The familiar point 'n' click interface is again used, but with one helpful alteration. When something on screen is pointed to, the most obvious verb to be used with it is highlighted and can be selected by pushing the right-hand mouse button.

This is one small improvement to a system that was already close to perfection. It's little touches like this that show how much thought Lucasfilm put into their games and help to make *Monkey*



Island such a joy to watch as well as play.

For example, Guybrush occasionally looks directly at you when someone is telling him something, as if to sarcastically say "Yeah, right!". At a point when a parrot has to be approached, all the commands turn into things like Prod, Fondle, Annoy, Stroke etc. The game is full of these touches and really help to add plenty of

atmosphere.

Lucasfilm has once again put itself at the top of the graphic adventure tree. The foot-tapping reggae music, marvelously animated and detailed graphics, one of the best control systems around and of course, an excellent story combine to produce one great big barrel of fun.

☆☆☆☆☆

Paul Presley

GILBERT'S SECRETS

Ron Gilbert is no stranger to the graphic adventure, having designed Lucasfilm's SCUMM programming system before bringing *Maniac Mansion* and *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* to our screens. For this, his next project, he laid down two guidelines: it had to have elements of fantasy, but in a realistic setting - and it definitely had to be a comedy. The pirate, with his swashbuckling antics and adventurous image seemed to fit the bill. Real pirates however, were not the kind of people you'd associate with the good guys, so Ron opted for the 'Disney look' by making them fun-loving treasure seekers.

A total of three months was spent on writing the story, during which time ideas for puzzles were taken from almost everywhere. With a long future in graphic adventures ahead of him, Ron keeps a list of puzzles that he adds to whenever something comes to him, be it reading a book, watching a film or just walking down the street. When it comes to writing a game, the list is consulted and appropriate puzzles are taken from it.

Nine further months of programming and development followed, with Ron getting fully involved in every area of the game. He joined Mark Ferrari and Steve Purcell on the graphics team, drawing a lot of the background sketches for the rooms himself. The same applied with Michael Land for the music, although he didn't compose any of it he did spend months going over each piece to ensure they had the right feel.

As with all games, nothing is ever completely perfect and *Monkey Island* is no exception. The main quibble Ron had was that the insult fighting was only used in one part of the game, rather than as a combat system for the fights throughout the story. Apart from that, he was more than impressed with the final result and can't really see how it could have been better.

We tend to agree.



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BATTLE CHESS II

Interplay, the American creator of The Bard's Tale series of role-playing games – is back with this, its second animated interpretation of Chess – this time with an Oriental twist. This classic strategy game dates back to 7th century India, where it was called 'Chaturanga'. Within three centuries the game had infiltrated China, Persia, and Europe (via Spanish and Italian traders).

Chinese Chess draws heavily on oriental culture and philosophy. The river which flows across the middle of the board, for example, represents the 'Celestial River' dividing the Northern and Southern territories of China. Essentially though, Chinese Chess is similar to its Western counterpart. The object of the game is still to put your opponent's King in 'checkmate'.

You can either play against another human player or the



computer. Each player has one King, two Rooks, two Cannons, two Knights, two Ministers, two Counsellors and five Pawns. Unlike conventional Chess though, the Knights cannot leap over pieces to make their move.

The program incorporates nine play levels. At novice level the average thinking time is five seconds, while the computer can take approximately 15 minutes at level eight (the average thinking time is adjustable from 1-10,000 minutes).

Battle Chess II is packed with options including load/save games, set-up board and modem/serial cable-play. At any time during the match you can force moves (computer makes the best move thought of so far), take back moves (you can take back as

many moves as you like) and suggest moves (gives a hint on your possible next move).

The board can be viewed in classic 2D, or as a three-dimensional display with animated figures representing each piece on the board. In this visual mode, every move is played out as a fully-animated sequence. For instance, the Chariot (Rook) transforms into a dragon for combat. These fighting 'mini-movies' are kept short and humorous. Obviously VGA graphics show these animations

to their best effect. Unfortunately there's a lot of disk-swapping involved when running Battle Chess II off floppy-disk.

Sound effects and Oriental music jingles can be heard through your internal speaker or Roland and AdLib soundboards. Battle Chess II also supports Sound Blaster, Covox, Game Blaster and Innovation sound devices.

Despite its novel theme, Battle Chess II doesn't offer enough variation on the original to make it more than an interesting insight into the Chinese way of play.

☆☆☆

Rik Haynes

Electronic Arts
(0753) 49442

£29.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	✓	AdLib	✓

COVERT ACTION

Who is the coolest, deadliest spy in the world? Not Sidney Reilly, not James Bond, but Max Remington. He may sound like something you'd use to trim your nostril hairs, but (according to MicroProse at least) he's actually the CIA's top man.

Covert Action casts you as Max, setting up 26 missions for you to crack. Although the missions have to be completed individually, they are all

MicroProse
(0666) 504326

£39.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	X	Joystick	✓
Roland	✓	AdLib	✓

executed with the ultimate aim of catching 'Mr Big'.

Each mission basically involves four sub-games: Combat, Driving, Phone Tapping and Code Breaking. There is, rather usefully, the option to practice each of these individually before launching into the full game.

Of the sub-games, Phone Tapping and Code Breaking are essentially fairly simple puzzle games. Both are fun to begin with, but start to get tedious after a while. The Driving and Combat games are far more action-orientated and stand up to a lot more play.

Driving involves manipulating two cars to chase and finally catch a suspect vehicle. The idea here is to use one car to do most of the actual chasing, while the other does all the back-up stuff including blocking the suspect's potential escape routes.

Combat is the most enjoy-

able of the four. It effectively uses the sort of bird's eye view that is put to good effect in action/strategy games such as *Laser Squad*.

You begin by equipping yourself with the necessary tools: bugs, grenades, safe-cracking gear and so on. Then it's a matter of breaking into the building and doing a bit of exploring. Each room is revealed on the map as you enter it, but you can never be sure quite what's behind each door, so a quick trigger finger is necessary.

Between each of these sub-games you receive teletyped messages from HQ and travel between the world's cities as dictated by the clues you receive. Success really



involves keeping an eye on the overall picture that you build up piece by piece. It is all too easy to tinker around with the sub-games and never really

settle down into playing the whole thing properly.

However, should you play it properly, taking careful note of the clues you find and so on, then it should prove to be a source of long-term entertainment.

If you're looking for an instantly accessible action/strategy game which doesn't require too much of the old grey matter then you're looking in the wrong place.

☆☆☆☆

Laurence Scottford

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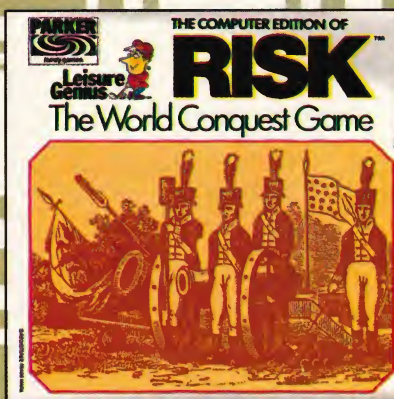


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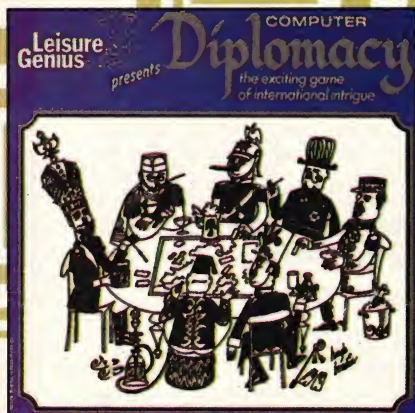
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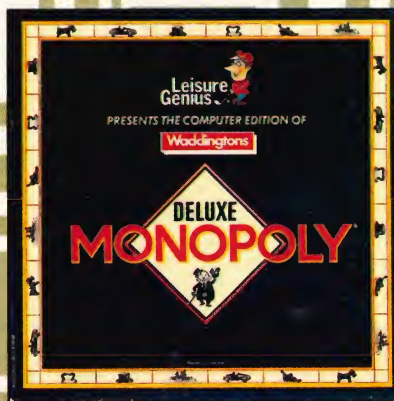
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DIPLOMACY® 1984/7 The Avalon Hill Game Company
RISK® 1959, 1988 Parker Brothers, Division of Kenner Parker Toys Inc. (KPT).

	IBM PC	AMIGA	ATARI ST	CBM 64 DISK	CBM 64 CASS	SPEC +3	SPEC CASS	AMS DISK	AMS CASS
SCRABBLE DE-LUXE	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
MONOPOLY DE-LUXE				•	•				
CLUEDO MASTER TEC	•	•	•						
DIPLOMACY	•								
RISK	•	•	•	•	•				

Why, if it ain't them Level 9 varmints agin! Level 9 was the development team responsible for some of the most popular text adventures on the 8-bit computers during the '80s. The company has been fairly quiet of late, but apparently this is because it's been hard at work developing its new adventure system, H.U.G.E. The first game to use this system is based on the exploits of the notorious outlaw of the title.

Following a brief scene-setting intro, the player is presented with the choice of playing either the Robin Hood-like Billy or the law-abiding sheriff Pat Garrett:

BILLY THE KID

the goals and emphasis shift slightly depending on who is selected. The aim is to try and increase your reputation by performing such deeds as escaping Garrett or winning shoot-outs (in Billy's case) or catching Billy or stopping runaway trains (if you choose to be Pat). Either way, it climaxes in the duel between Pat and Billy, from which only one can walk away alive.

Having passed the attractive animated intro, the first screen to appear is a scrolling map of the entire area. A cursor is moved to locations of interest, such as a town or a wagon train. When you've found somewhere or something you want

to visit, pressing Fire takes you there.

Towns are depicted in a semi-Sierra fashion, with you guiding a large Billy (or Pat) around several pseudo-3D screens - certain buildings are then entered by simply moving Billy into the doorway. Billy can interact to a limited extent with the people he meets via a multiple choice menu system. To break up the wandering around there are several varied arcade sequences, such as shoot-outs, train hijacks and cattle stealing.

Ocean and Level 9 could well be onto a winner here. The task is a bit vague at first, but it isn't long before you have a few pointers as to what you have to do. The graphics are very attractive and well animated, although I preferred the EGA graphics to the VGA (I thought the colour scheme more vivid - perverse, eh?). It

must also be stressed that the full benefit will only be gleaned by those with a powerful PC.

If there is a fault, it's that the arcade games are a little easy, but they're still fun, so what the heck! By the way, those with a sound add-on and a C&W bent are in for a treat!

☆☆☆☆

David Upchurch



Ocean			
(061) 832 6633			
£29.99			
5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	X	AdLib	✓

TV SPORTS BASKETBALL

Cinemaware is a company known for producing two distinct strains of game: the interactive movie (which includes such notable performers as *Rocket Ranger* and the current smash, *It Came From The Desert*, reviewed on page 52), and the sports simulation presented with a televisual slant. This one obviously fits neatly into the latter category.

Similar in both look and style to its American footballing predecessor,

TV Sports Basketball allows the player to indulge in a variety of games, from a straightforward arcade-style friendly right through to competing in an entire league, taking into account a variety of facts, form and statistics.

Although the hectic pace of the real thing has had to be toned down somewhat (not only because the computer's processor would find it difficult to keep up, but also because it would take a real freak to be able to keep up with the action), it still produces challenging end-to-end action and a rush of adrenalin whenever the ball is 'turned over'.

Essentially, the player controls one on-screen giant at a time, represented by the player with a slightly darker vest. The rest of the team behaves according to the tactics chosen - either before play, during time-outs or during the 'playcalling' section which appears when the players are crossing court from one end to the other. Full substitution is

allowed from a panel of 12 players - once again this option is exercised during the breaks in play mentioned above.

Although the TV presentation is mostly superfluous (the commentator doesn't really add anything to the action - just like in real life really), it does provide a wealth of statistics which can be used to

good effect in substitutions and so on.

But, as with all sports simulations, what's important is that way that this one plays - and there are no real faults in this department. It may not have quite the compelling air which graced *TV Sports Football*, but that has more to do with the nature of the game which is being simulated rather than the simulation (there's something, if you will, throwaway about basketball which is probably the reason that it's never really caught on in these parts).

This is yet another polished and playable effort from what's fast becoming America's most critically acclaimed development team. Roll on *TV Sports Baseball*.

☆☆☆☆

Jimmy Taylor

Cinemaware
(071) 928 1454

£34.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	X	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
Roland	X	AdLib	X



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BUCK ROGERS: COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY

Forget the TV series. SSI's biggest release since the AD&D games has nothing to do with Gil Gerard or his robot sidekick Twiki. Based on the recent table-top RPG from TSR and using a variant of the AD&D system, this is based on the world of the 25th century rather than the characters.

It's not a great time to be on Earth any more as it has become a dumping ground of industrial pol-

lution for the other planets in the solar system: Mars, Venus, Luna and the Asteroid Belt. Over the four previous centuries an international alliance known as RAM (Russo-American Mercantile) was formed and slowly populated the other planets. Growing in size and power, RAM became cruel and oppressive and started to rule Earth with an iron hand.

Naturally a resistance group formed (NEO - New Earth

Organisation), adopting the forgotten hero Buck Rogers as its symbol. It is to this daring band of rebels that your characters are recruited.

Characters can be from any of six races:

Terrans (Earthlings),

Martians, Venusians, Mercurians, Tinkers and Desert Runners, each with different abilities.

A wealth of different skills are available to each character ranging from piloting skills to battle tactics and planet survival. Skills affect different situations - for example, Leadership comes into its own in battle situations.

Invariably your spacecraft will enter into ship-to-ship combat which, unfortunately, isn't as good as it could have been. Each craft has six attributes each with a number of 'hit points'. Each member of your party controls one of your ship's weapons and takes it in turns to fire on the enemy. You don't get to see the two ships engaging each other, instead you are presented with a static of your enemy and a list of his attributes. Once destroyed you are able to salvage your opponent to sell for spare parts.

The plot (RAM attempting to sterilise Earth's population) is

unfortunately hidden behind the system, although it does shine in places. However, having not made a vast amount of progress from the AD&D series, *Buck Rogers* leaves you feeling that you've seen it all before. It's a good game to start the series with though, and I'm looking forward to the next couple of releases.

☆☆☆

Paul Presley



SSI/US Gold (021) 625 3366			
£34.99			
5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	✓
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
Roland	X	AdLib	✓

TUNNELS & TROLLS: CRUSADERS OF KHAZAN

Yes there was life before *Dungeons & Dragons*. One of the earliest 'official' table-top RPGs was *Tunnels & Trolls*. Immensely popular with role-players of the time, it suffered due to the 'underground' nature of RPGs. That all changed with D&D, but that's another story.

T&T concerns itself with The Dragon Continent (as illustrated with the impressive in-box map) and the growing unrest between man and his allies

and the orcs and trolls of the Death Empress.

Ages past, a mighty battle between Lerotra'hh and the mighty wizard Khazan resulted in a deal in which Khazan would sacrifice himself for man's freedom. A complex pact was drawn up preventing Lerotra'hh from simply overpowering man once the wizard was gone, but this is slowly being shattered and man is once again fighting a losing battle. Inspired by heroes of old, your party of four sets out in search of the entombed Khazan in an attempt to waken him and prevent the Death Empress's onslaught.

The simplistic nature of T&T is evident throughout, starting with the four basic fantasy characters - humans, elves, dwarves and hobbits (called Hobbs) and the three basic fantasy careers - warrior, wizard and thief. There's nothing spectacular about the character generation, a list of attributes with random num-

bers, although one small touch, that often gets overlooked elsewhere, is the addition of languages.

Exploration of the land comes in two stages. In towns and cities the screen shows only what you see around you, blacking out what lies behind corners and doors. Out in the wilderness you're presented with an overland map showing everything in the surrounding land.

The two main tests for an RPG are interaction and, unfortunately, combat.

Encounters with anyone other than shopkeepers generally run along the lines of a stream of text with a multiple choice decision at the end. Despite the

fact that it sounds pretty limiting, the system is saved thanks to it being extremely well written. Combat can be automatic or manually controlled, with each character able to attack, defend and, amusingly, push your enemies back a couple of squares. On the whole it's not very exciting and only regains slight interest when using magic.

T&T manages to conjure up the simplistic feel of the table-top game but whether this is a good thing depends on how nostalgic you feel. As previously stated, it is very well written and that is what sets it apart from other RPGs of this nature.

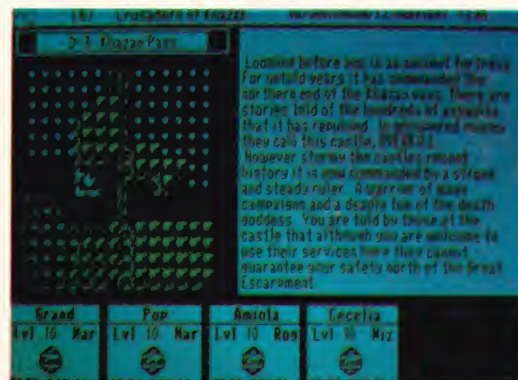
☆☆☆

Jimmy Taylor

New World/US Gold
(021) 625 3366

£29.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	✓	Joystick	✓
Roland	X	AdLib	X



NIGHTBREED

When Ocean picked up the rights to Clive Barker's (critically panned) film, *NightBreed*, it decided that the opportunity was too good to waste and thus opted to produce two games on the same theme: one a straightforward arcade action game, the other a 'Cinemaware-style' interactive adventure.

Both chronicle the adventures of Aaron Boon, both attempt to recreate the film's plot to some degree and both are sold separately, presumably to cater for the need of all games players.

THE INTERACTIVE MOVIE

"The Nightmare has begun," opens the blurb - and pretty accurately. *NightBreed - The Interactive Movie* is an epic attempt, comprising stacks of different game elements and ideas, but it's about as much fun as a wet weekend in Purgatory.

The game opens with Boon heading for the hospital to see if he really is whacko. The 'travel' section which follows is, frankly, tedious: a picturesque road-map

the fire button in rhythm. Interest-free gameplay.

Tap correctly and Boon escapes Peloquin - only to be immediately shot by the cops. At the morgue, however, he awakes to find that he is not actually dead, he's now one of the Nightbreed (thanks to an earlier peck on the neck from Peloquin) and must head back for Midian - through the map section... again.

And so it goes...

The basic problem with converting a horror movie to computer that the atmosphere is almost impossible to capture - and this is a prime example. Elements which could look horrible and scary on the screen simply look comic, while the many game elements are so disparate that none can stand alone as a game in itself.

☆☆

THE ARCADE GAME

Your aim - in Ocean's second stab at the movie conversion - is to guide Boon through Midian, visit Baphomet, release some Berserkers, rescue the fair Lori, have numerous punch-ups and finally take on the psychopathic Mask. Sounds like fun? Forget it.

This version, at least, looks excellent. The graphics are well defined, well animated and even quite eerie. Unfortunately the gameplay stinks. Boon simply runs along, fighting insane policemen (straight punch and low kick options are all that are available) collecting objects and avoiding the Nightbreed monsters.

Also, the locations are so claustrophobic that taking one hit, frequently means being unable to

avoid a host of others. Let the policeman hit you once, and you'll be blasted by the grenade, hit by the rocket launcher, burned by the flamethrower and blown up by the time bomb. And even that isn't as exciting as it sounds.

To save playing through early levels once the later stages have been reached, a worryingly ill-considered pass key routine has been included: large letter 'M's are carved into the walls throughout the game, each with a distinctive border. On reaching one of these, the player has to pause the game to sketch down the pattern.

Once all three lives have been lost, the player can opt to visit the pass-key section, where, by guiding the cursor over a set of broken M pieces, he can construct a complete M appropriate to the stage he wishes to visit. Fine. Except that...

You only have one chance per go to enter a pass key. Screw up and you have to go right back to the start. As there's no quit option, you can't have another go at the pass key until you've lost all your lives. And even that would be forgivable were it not for the fact that if you simply move the cursor over a piece in the wrong way, or hold down the wrong direction key (not even fire) it will be confirmed. There's no Edit option either. So you're comprehensively stuffed.

Lots of the game's ideas are sound: a mission against time to rescue a whole race and your girlfriend isn't bad for a start. But it plays like a dog and is irritating rather than challenging.

☆☆

Jim Douglas



Ocean
(061) 832 6633

£24.99 (Arcade)

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	X	Hercules	X
Mouse	X	Joystick	✓
Roland	X	AdLib	X

£29.99 (Interactive)

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	X
Mouse	X	Joystick	✓
Roland	✓	AdLib	X

is portrayed, where, by clicking from junction to junction, you move Boon towards the hospital.

As Boon's car bumbles down the narrow lanes, there's an extremely good chance that he'll run into a police road block. Here, he can turn around and try another route or crash through and take his chances - choosing the latter option can result in a holed petrol tank or punctured tyres, which reduce Boon's speed by half and make the stage frightfully boring.

At the hospital Boon learns of Midian: a super place where everyone is accepted for what they are. So off he goes (through the map section again) to a graveyard in the top right area of the screen.

Here, selecting the correct multiple choice option (yes, really) leads to him being pursued by the evil Peloquin: to escape this ghastly cannibal you have to, wait for it, tap



OPERATION STEALTH

A top-secret, radar-invisible stealth plane is stolen during its test flight: blame falls on either the KGB or SPYDER (a global criminal organisation, intent on taking over the world). Only one man is capable of bringing it back: Bond, Jame... Glames, John Glames (sorry, I could have sworn that we were in the middle of an 007 movie here).

Delphine Software's second 'Cinematique' game employs the same system as its critically-acclaimed *Future Wars*, but with a few additions. Basically, there is no text-input, instead the 'Operate' and 'Use' commands take care of most actions necessary to complete the game, while 'Take', 'Speak' and 'Examine' make up the rest of the game's control menu.

Future Wars' main problem was with the 'Come a little closer' messages which appeared when your on-screen character was in the wrong position to perform the required action. You would then have to fuss around finding the correct place to stand, wrestling with the system rather than the puzzles. That problem has now been eradicated and your character moves automatically to wherever he should be.

However, character movement still causes one or two problems due to the 'straight-line' system. Clicking on the desired point on the screen does not cause your character to negotiate his way there, instead he just moves in a straight line towards the cursor, stopping as soon as he comes into contact with anything in his path. Apart from that the only other

problems come in the shape of some slightly dodgy text translations, a couple of overly long arcade sections and, at times, slow animation speed.

The graphics, though effective, aren't quite as detailed as *Future Wars*.

There are still some high-quality graphics but, unfortunately, as a screen becomes more detailed the animation speed starts to slow down. It's a minor point and doesn't detract

from the gameplay to any great degree, but it is noticeable and brings down the overall presentation.

The graphics are backed up by an impressive Roland or AdLib soundtrack that unfortunately the internal speaker can't beep up to (surprise, surprise). Whether or not this will ever make it onto CD (as happened with *Future Wars*' music) is questionable, but there are certainly a couple of foot-tapping melodies in there. Another nice touch is that, along with the music, the sound effects are generated through the sound boards.

But as we all know, graphics and sound do not make a game, so what of the storyline and the puzzles? The plot is similar to almost



any '70s' James Bond movie (and in some ways superior), full of wondrous gadgets, megalomaniacs threatening to destroy the world and plenty of stunts - from hanging from the bottom of a helicopter to fighting on jet-skis.

It's these action sequences that class *Operation Stealth* as an interactive movie rather than a graphic adventure game. There are four actual 'arcade' games to be played: two mazes, an underwater diving game and the aforementioned jet-ski fight. There are also plenty of arcade-type influences scattered throughout giving the game a wider appeal, catering for the tastes of most gamers.

Of the actual arcade games the two maze sections are probably too long for their own good. Initially the change of pace is welcome - and indeed the mazes do provide a bit of quick-thinking challenge - it's just that once you've completed one or two you want to get back to the story and the rest of them become a chore.

The jet-ski section suffers from being a little too hard (I found it better not to move and just hope that I wasn't hit) and only the underwater game seemed to fit in comfortably.

On the adventure side, the puzzles are both well balanced and perfectly logical, allowing you to progress pretty far, with each puzzle slowly growing in complexity until suddenly you're hit with a real stumper. There are a few occasions when the actual system lets you down, responding sluggishly to your commands - especially when you've got a time limit ticking away - so saving the game at regular points is essential.

If I've sounded a little negative so far, it's only because the Cinematique system is so good that I've had to work quite hard to find its faults. The good points far outweigh the bad, and *Operation Stealth* provides a high-quality, lasting challenge that really shouldn't be missed.

If Delphine can iron out the few bugs still in the Cinematique system in time for the next release (*Cruise For a Corpse*) then it will probably find itself as the leader in the interactive movie stakes.

☆☆☆☆

Paul Presley

US Gold/Delphine
(021) 625 3366

£29.99

5 1/4"	✓	3 1/2"	✓
CGA	✓	EGA	✓
VGA	✓	Hercules	✓
Mouse	✓	Joystick	X
Roland	✓	AdLib	✓



★ POCKET SIZED ★ PC-COMPATIBLE ★ PERSONAL ORGANISER ★



ATARI Portfolio



THE PC IN YOUR POCKET

The new Portfolio from Atari is the world's first pocket-sized electronic organiser that is also a powerful PC compatible computer, with a full QWERTY keyboard and scrolling 80x25 character display.

Portfolio includes everything you would expect from an electronic organiser - an address and telephone book, time manager, diary and sophisticated calculator.

Portfolio also includes several functions that you would not expect - a spreadsheet for your personal budget and expense records, as well as a text processor for typing memos and letters.

And, because Atari's Portfolio is PC compatible, it can communicate with your desktop PC at home, or in the office. You can transfer files from one to the other, to enable you to update your reports and figures with the Portfolio while you are on the move.

FOR ONLY **£199** INC VAT

SPECIFICATION

- ★ **Processor:** Intel 80C88 at 4.9152Mhz.
- ★ **Operating System:** Compatible with MS-DOS 2.11.
- ★ **Internal ROM:** 256K containing BIOS, operating system and applications suite.
- ★ **RAM:** 128K with an internal RAM disk, configurable from 8K. Externally expandable to 640K RAM.
- ★ **Keyboard:** 63 keys, QWERTY, IBM PC BIOS compatible. Buried numeric pad and function keys. Optional key click.
- ★ **Character Set:** Extended IBM ASCII (255 characters).
- ★ **Mass storage:** credit card sized memory cards (32K or 64K or 128K RAM).
- ★ **Display:** Graphics LCD, supertwist technology, MDA compatible. 40 columns x 8 lines, 240 x 64 pixels (with the option to window a full 80 x 25 character display). Keyboard controlled contrast.
- ★ **Peripherals:** 60 pin expansion BUS to take serial and parallel ports and memory expansion units.
- ★ **Size:** 8" x 4" x 1" (200mm x 105mm x 29mm).
- ★ **Weight:** 495 grammes (with batteries).
- ★ **Applications:** calendar and diary, address and phone book, Lotus 1-2-3 compatible spreadsheet, text processor, communications software.

COMING SOON!

In addition to the excellent software built-in to the Portfolio Free of Charge (see right), other software and peripheral products, such as the sophisticated Pocket Finance package and serial/centronics interfaces are available. And it doesn't stop there. Many manufacturers have recognised the potential of the Portfolio and have already started to design new peripherals and software. Products currently under development include: Serial interface with built in mini modem, Apple Macintosh interface, business, utility and programming software plus a range of adventure, and battle strategy games. For further free details on the Portfolio range, fill in the coupon below and return it to Silica Systems now.

5 BUILT-IN APPLICATIONS TO GET YOU ORGANISED!

To get you started, Portfolio comes with a suite of five useful functions built-in, all accessible from a simple menu display.

TIME MANAGER

More than just an electronic diary, the Portfolio Time Manager enables you to plan your appointments via a comprehensive calendar and diary. It can even be programmed to sound an audible alarm at specific times to remind you of important appointments.

CALCULATOR

Your Portfolio will be invaluable in the office or at home as a powerful pocket calculator. It has a full range of functions, including factorial,

power and root calculations, all with multi display formats and memories.

ADDRESS BOOK & DIALLER

Portfolio has a complete address book facility that allows you to store hundreds of addresses and phone numbers. And, at the touch of a button, you can retrieve any one of them, or search for a specific grouping, such as "all Italian restaurants". And, when you are ready to book your table, hold your Portfolio to your telephone mouthpiece and use its special built-in tone dialler to dial the number for you.

TEXT PROCESSOR

The Portfolio's built-in text processor program

includes word wrap, line and column count, string search, in fact most of the functions you would find in a word processor. It handles printer and word processor control codes and allows easy transfer of files between Portfolio and your desktop PC.

SPREADSHEET

For real calculating power, Portfolio has a Lotus 1-2-3 compatible spreadsheet built-in. It has 127 columns x 225 rows and reads/writes Lotus V1.0 and V2.01 files, so you can transfer data to and from Lotus 1-2-3 on your desktop PC. The Portfolio's 256K ROM includes MS-DOS and PC BIOS compatible systems software.



MEMORY CARDS

Portfolio can store and retrieve data and programs from its own RAM, or from small credit card size memory cards, that slot into its built-in card drive. The cards are available in three sizes, 32K, 64K and 128K, so you can carry a library of data in your pocket. The card drive also accepts ROM cards, which can contain commercial or custom software



POWER SUPPLY

Portfolio is powered by three AA batteries which will run for up to six weeks with normal use, or from the mains using an adaptor. All the peripherals take their power from the Portfolio, so no extra batteries or adaptors are required. A 'battery-low' warning and memory back-up ensure that information is not lost when the batteries are changed.



INTERFACES & PERIPHERALS

Portfolio can communicate with other computers and supports a growing range of peripherals via a built-in 60 pin bus connector. Peripherals available include serial and parallel interfaces and memory expanders (to 640K). You can also add a card drive to your desktop PC, to enable it to read/write to Portfolio's cards.

SILICA SYSTEMS OFFER YOU

FREE OVERNIGHT COURIER DELIVERY: On all hardware orders shipped in the UK.
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ESTABLISHED 12 YEARS: Proven track record in professional computer sales.
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Before you decide when to buy your new Atari Portfolio, we suggest you think very carefully about WHERE you buy it. Consider what it will be like a few months after buying your Portfolio, when you may require additional peripherals or software, or help and advice with your new purchase. And, will the company you buy from contact you with details of new Portfolio products? At Silica Systems, we ensure that you will have nothing to worry about. Silica Systems is a new division of Silica Shop, the UK's leading Atari specialists. This new division has been established to provide a service to the more serious home user, as well as to business and education purchasers. Silica have been established for over 12 years, and have an annual turnover of £13 million. With our unrivalled experience and expertise, we can now claim to meet our customers' requirements with an understanding which is second to none. But don't just take our word for it. Complete and return the coupon now, for our latest Free literature and begin to experience the "Silica Systems Service".

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PLEASE SEND INFORMATION ON PORTFOLIO

Mr/Mrs/Ms: Initials: Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel (Home): Tel (Work):

Company Name:

Which computer(s), if any, do you own?

Yes - it's that part of the issue again, where *PC Leisure* gazes into its crystal ball to bring you news of what's up and coming from the top names in entertainment software. So, without further ado, it's...

WING COMMANDER

- **FROM:** Origin/Mindscape
- **TELEPHONE:** (044486) 545
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £34.99

A complete change of direction from the people that brought you the *Ultima* series, *Wing Commander* is essentially a space-based flight simulator, married to an all-action combat game.

There's a choice of four ships to pilot and a total of 35 missions awaiting your attention: not only do you have to perform well on these, but you've also got to lead your fellow pilots to victory (hence the name, *Wing Commander*).

The whole shooting match is wrapped up in an almost cinematic style: there are digitised animations in the attract sequences, while the soundtrack includes a total

of 13 different tunes to add atmosphere to the dogfight sequences alone.

However, the one great drawback appears to be that the program will need some beefy processing power to make it work to its full effect. The demo which we ran on PC Leisure's 26Mhz machine (that's a very fast computer indeed) was impressive enough, but it remains to be seen if the excitement will carry over to any slower processor.



KICK OFF 2

- **FROM:** Anco
- **TELEPHONE:** (0322) 92518
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £24.99

Kick Off was undoubtedly the greatest soccer game ever to grace the screens of Atari ST and Commodore Amiga computers all over the country... at least, that was, until the

superb sequel hit the streets. And now at long last, all of that fast-action, instinctively playable football fun is finally about to make it to MS-DOS format.

Soccer, *Kick Off* style, is played via an overhead view with seemingly tiny characters racing about an oversized pitch. However, the ease with which the aspiring player can grasp the mechanics of trapping, shooting, tackling and dribbling makes up for any of the graphical shortcomings.

A range of options which would be the envy of many flight simulators is on offer, including team selection lists, choice of strip, team formations and so forth. But at the end of the day Brian, it's all about playability and this one has it in spades. This one has the potential to become the definitive PC soccer game.



MiG-29 FULCRUM

- **FROM:** Domark
- **TELEPHONE:** (081) 780 2222
- **RELEASE DATE:** December
- **Price:** TBA

Coming in slightly behind Electronic Arts' *Stormovik* (see review, page 58), this is yet another flight simulator with a Russian flavour. Programmed by SIMIS (a team composed of ex British Aerospace employees), with help from the Soviet news agency, TASS, the simulator recreates the feel and capabilities of the MiG-29 Fulcrum, a plane which is even acknowledged by NATO to be the finest air superiority fighter in current service.

The scenario involves a good deal of training: starting as one of an elite group of trainees, you battle through a number of real-world missions, including sorties above Russian airspace (including the Chinese border) and - more contemporary - the Gulf.

The missions aren't all combat based however, they also include photo reconnaissance and so on. All of the features which up to date simulation users have come to expect are featured, including out-of-plane views, missile-eye views and animated and still graphic sequences to set the scenes.



XIPHOS



- **FROM:** Electronic Zoo
- **TELEPHONE:** (0453) 887008
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £24.99

Don't look now, it's another flight simulator with a spacey atmosphere, featuring digitised backdrops and a whole host of animated spacecraft rendered in glorious 3D.

Taking place across five universes, the manufacturers claim that this one not only combines elements of strategy and shoot 'em up action, but also offers some

degree of text adventuring!

Basically though, the game can be played in one of two modes, arcade or mission. The prime objective in Arcade mode is to test your speed, ingenuity and reflexes... and destroy as many

alien craft as possible. In Mission mode, a little more thought is necessary if you're top achieve the ultimate aim of destroying the enemy planet, Xiphos.

At this stage the publisher's claims become a little extravagant as it's claimed that: "In many ways Xiphos borders on being a movie as well as an interactive game. It is possible to sit back and watch the action and the game unfold." We'll let you know what it turns out in a full review in the very near future.

BATTLETECH II

- **FROM:** Infocom/Activision
- **TELEPHONE:** (0734) 311666
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £29.99

Subtitled 'The Crescent Hawk's Revenge', this sequel once again places the player inside a 30-foot-tall robotic war machine, armed to the teeth and ready for action. Taking up where the original left off, Jason Youngblood goes in search of his kidnapped father and winds up defending the inner sphere of the five Successor States from the evil Clans.

Originally based on a table-top RPG, *Battletech II* sees a whole

host of Battletechs (the monster robots) - including the latest in killing technology, the Omnimech - engage in a series of epic battles over more than 20 scenarios set on five planets.

In what's becoming increasingly



common in games of this type, each battle's outcome reflects in the progress of a more major conflict: here we're promised a 'non-linear plot with multiple endings'.

ATF II

- **FROM:** Digital Integration
- **TELEPHONE:** (02760) 684044
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £24.99

Digital Integration is a company most noted for its contributions to the art of computer flight simulation. However, this tale of global conflict is a sequel to one of its rare arcade efforts, *Advanced Tactical Fighter*.

Basically though, the action remains air-based, and the profusion of weapons, options, on-screen information and so on means that it doesn't in fact stray too far from its company's usual territory. In fact, it could almost be described as an arcade flight simulator.

There are two distinct stages to

the scenario. Before taking off, the player chooses firstly a theatre of war, then a number of missions within that theatre and finally the armaments payload which will best work in the chosen conflict.

The player's efforts and results reflect directly on the outcome of the entire war, a number of graphs shown during the debriefing session indicate the current balance of power and provide some useful clues as to what should be tackled next.

A number of skill levels (represented by different pilots of varying experience ability) and the almost everlasting war scenario means that depth is one thing that this program shouldn't be



F-14 TOMCAT

- **FROM:** Activision
- **TELEPHONE:** (0734) 311666
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £29.99

There's hardly a contemporary fighter plane left that hasn't made it to the PC at this stage, but Activision claims that the release of this, its latest simulator, gives MS-DOS users their first chance to take to the skies in the US Navy's workhorse F-14.

Take your opportunity to become Top Gun, by working your way up through a series of off-carrier missions to eventually become eligible for the Naval

Fighter Weapons School.

Once there, the player takes on the might of nine other candidates for the coveted title in a series of head to head dogfight scenarios.

A number of outside views enable the combatants to search the skies for their elusive opponents, a task which is made slightly easier by the Radar Intercept Officer who makes up the plane's crew.

Other promised features include a replay option for viewing flight highlights and bit-mapped explosion effects for greater realism.



S.T.U.N. RUNNER

- **FROM:** Tengen Domark
- **TELEPHONE:** (081) 780 2222
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £24.99

Tengen's '900 miles-per-hour' futuristic racing coin-op is almost ready to make the quantum leap onto the PC through Domark's long-standing tie-up with the US manufacturer.

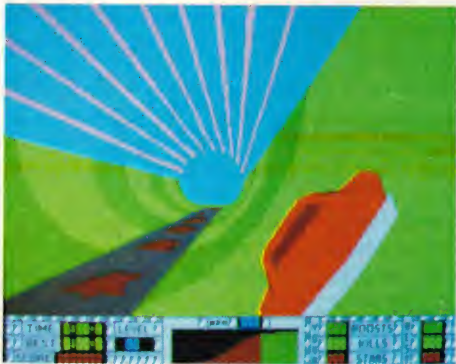
Enter the S.T.U.N. (that's the Spread, Tunnel, Underground, Network) and you enter a world of high speed, twisting tunnel courses and - finally - the 'ultimate challenge'.

As in a bobsled race, the S.T.U.N. Runner increases speed by riding the tunnel's outer walls, avoiding collisions with enemy vehicles and using the boost pads for extra power. These latter elements propel the

craft to such high speeds that it actually becomes transparent.

It's not all sporting action either. You often have to make use of the on-board lasers and 'Shockwaves' to deal with your numerous opponents.

All of this action, we're promised, will take place over a polygon-generated course, incorporating all 380 different objects from the original arcade machine - no mean feat if the programmers can pull it off.



SHANGHAI II: DRAGONS EYE



- **FROM:** Activision
- **TELEPHONE:** (0734) 311666
- **RELEASE DATE:** Late Nov
- **Price:** £29.99

This sequel to Activision's award-winning Mah Jong strategy game offers a number of improvements over the original, including new tile layouts, enhanced animation and sound effects and the added challenge of a new game, Dragon's Eye.

As ever, the idea is to match up pairs of tiles to remove them from the board. Only tiles sitting on the outside edge of a line come

into play, with the ultimate object being to completely clear the board. A good memory is necessary, along with a hint of strategic thinking, oh... and a little luck.

Players gain experience and progress through a number of levels (another feature

which the original lacked), and can also compete in one of three modes: tournament, challenge or solitaire.

Rewards for skill and perseverance come first in the shape of the animated animals which greet the completion of a new layout, and eventually lead to the right to play Dragon's Breath, where the idea is to place tiles to outmanoeuvre the computer.

The whole package will be rounded off by an editor program which allows the player to design his or her own tile layouts.

ALTERED DESTINY



- **FROM:** Accolade
- **TELEPHONE:** (071) 738 1379
- **RELEASE DATE:** Mid Nov
- **Price:** £29.99

P.J. Barrett is a mild-mannered nobody, content to simply keep up his nine-to-five and liking nothing more than to relax in front of the TV screen of an evening. Poor sap, didn't he know he was in a computer game?

Our hero is enjoying just such an ordinary pleasure when, wouldn't you know it, he's sucked through the TV into an alternate reality, far removed from anything that his limited imagination could ever conjure up.

What happens next is, of course,

an animated adventure in the style made famous by the chaps at Sierra (this is the second such game which Accolade has attempted, check out the review of *Search For The King*, last issue). Mr Barrett eventually finds himself embroiled in a quest to find the mysterious Helmar and while he's at it put the whole of his new environment to rights.

This task takes him through such evocatively-named locations as The Forest Of Dreams, The Floating Island, The Caves Of Death and The Yula Graveyard, all depicted in lurid colours and ably supported by Roland-rendered music (for those of you who have the equipment).

ELVIRA- MISTRESS OF THE DARK

•FROM: Accolade
•TELEPHONE: (071) 738 1379
•RELEASE DATE: Mid Nov
•Price: £29.99

This is one that nearly got away, because the licence to America's most up-front late night film presenter almost got lost in the void when its original publisher, Tynesoft, went broke this Summer. However, Horrorsoft (the development team, confusing isn't it) hawked the half-finished game around a number of other publishers with US firm Accolade eventually snapping up the rights to *The Mistress Of The Dark*.

Those of you expecting the tongue in cheek style of the



raven-haired beauty's TV show (for the uninitiated, all Elvira does is recline on a couch taking the Michael out of a series of truly awful B-movies) are likely to be in for a shock, as the game is actually a large-scale adventure somewhat in the vein of *Dungeon Master* et al, which loses the laughs in favour of a ketchup beanfeast.

Basically, the plot concerns Elvira's race against time (and a number of her undead relatives) in a search for a missing scroll. Find out more next issue when we'll bring you a full review.

CHAMPION OF THE RAJ

•FROM: Mirrorsoft
•TELEPHONE: (071) 928 1454
•RELEASE DATE: Late Nov
•Price: £29.99



A role-player with a strategy element and an early 1900's setting, *Champion Of The Raj* sets either six players head to head, or one

player against the computer up to six times in an effort to decide the fate of the Indian sub-continent.

The six groups doing battle for a controlling interest range from the British East India Company to the Mogul dynasty and other minor Principalities.

Apparently, the strategy element is balanced out by the inclusion of arcade sequences including a tiger hunt and an elephant race.

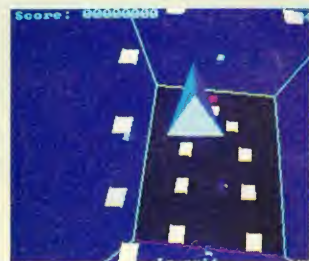
Champion has been developed by Level 9, the development team behind Ocean's *Billy The Kid* among others, and will appear on Mirrorsoft's Image Works label.

ALPHA WAVES

•FROM: Infogrames
•TELEPHONE: (071) 738 8199
•RELEASE DATE: Unknown
•Price: £24.99

Apparently, "*Alpha Waves* is not just a new game, it's a new concept..." get this, it's a "marriage of the spirit and technology." Yep, it's 'over the top press release' time again, as Infogrames attempts to completely hide the nature of this game under a barrage of nonsense.

Take this for example: "The game-play is of unique conception. The management of an item



in a cube space in three dimensions. The item has to negotiate a platform and stairway in order to reach the magic door. This three dimensional world is also inhabited by polygonal beings endowed with an intelligence and language that are not of this world."

No, we didn't catch that either, but rest assured we'll let you know what it's all about as soon as we find out.

NINJA MUTANT HERO TURTLES

•FROM: Mirrorsoft
•TELEPHONE: (071) 928 1454
•RELEASE DATE: Early Dec
•Price: £29.99

Cowabunga... and so on.

Donatello, Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo, those pizza-eating mutated heroes in half shells who dwell in the New York sewer system are widely tipped to become the smash of the Christmas season when their cinematic exploits are unleashed on these shores.

The game too should do enormous business, in fact sources are predicting that Mirrorsoft could in fact go one bet-

ter than simply taking the Christmas Number One slot by producing the biggest-selling computer game of all time.

The turtles bid to rescue their 'friend' April O'Neil from the evil Shredder - while the action is likewise predictable: fight the team through a number of enemy infested locations, switching from turtle to turtle to take advantage of each one's individual strengths.

This is one game that will definitely be aimed at the kids, so it will be interesting to see how it fares on this, more adult, format.



SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE

•FROM: Lucasfilms/US Gold
•TELEPHONE: (021) 625 3366
•RELEASE DATE: Early Dec
•Price: TBA

What would have happened if Hitler had begun to develop his 'super weapons' just a year or so before he actually did? Would the V1 and V2 bombs have significantly changed the course of

WWII if they had been produced in sufficient quantities? Well, no-one knows really, but Lucasfilm's latest flight simulator gives you a chance to see.

Similar in style to its other recent flyer, *Their Finest Hour*, *Secret Weapons* allows you to take both sides: either pilot a flying fortress, or take the opposition's place and attempt to turn the tide of battle yourself.

It all sounds extremely promising, and if it turns out to be as high quality a product as its predecessor then it won't go too far wrong.



BATTLE COMMAND

•FROM: Ocean
•TELEPHONE: (061) 832 6633
•RELEASE DATE: Late Nov
•Price: £29.99

Developed by Realtime, the team behind Rainbird's superb *Carrier Command*, and published by Ocean (probably the biggest software company around at the moment, but one which has yet to make a splash in the PC market), this program has just about as good a pedigree as you could get. Basically it's a tank simulator, but one that's based in a world more imaginary than real. A number of interlocking missions - from basic training right up to

the final conflict - are undertaken within a 3D environment, with the action viewable from all angles. If its classy predecessor is anything to go by, then this could be one of the great programs of the year, and here at *PC Leisure* we're waiting with bated breath. More news as we get it.



SO REAL YOU CAN SMELL THE SMOKE

THE NO.1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"ROMEO 25 - THIS IS MIKE 77 - SPOT REPORT - 5 T72 TANKS MOVING WEST - GRID 190852 - CONTINUING OVER"

Capt. Sean Bannon snapped his head to the left. There was only one place where the Russians could be, and that was on the hill 2200 metres away. All the training, planning and preparations were over. Team Yankee was about to learn if the team's seventy nine men and twenty five million dollars worth of equipment could do what they were supposed to do.

Team Yankee is designed to test your leadership and tactical skills to the quick. You can display in either "quadrant mode" where all four platoons may be controlled at once or Full-screen Mode where the display homes in on just one platoon.



You have the flexibility to display either an overhead map view of the surrounding area, a simulated 3-d view of the battlefield, or a status screen showing the performance of all vehicles in a platoon. Irrespective of which screen mode you choose during battle, there is a constant column of information to the right of the screen.



To the right of the compasses are five icons which represent the various types of weaponry available to the unit.

- MACHINE GUN - which is always available to the player and has an 'infinite' number of rounds.
- SMOKE - a smoke grenade which allows enemy vision to be obscured.
- HEAT - a high explosive anti-tank round
- SABOT - an armor-piercing tungsten shell
- TOW - a high-range anti-tank missile

The major capability on the quadrant map screen is to alter the movement and formation of any platoon. The whole of the map may be viewed at once, or you may zoom into any portion of the battlefield using the icons to the right of the map.

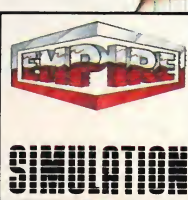


M1 ABRAMS TANK

- 50 CALIBER ANTI-AIRCRAFT MACHINE GUN
- 7.62mm LOADERS MACHINE GUN
- 1500 HP GAS TURBINE ENGINE
- 105mm GUN
- BORE SIGHTING MIRROR
- SMOKE DISCHARGES

Crew: Four Main Gun Ammo: 55 Rounds
Armor: Chobham (steel, ceramics, plastic)
Combat Weight: 54.5 metric tons

Five major scenarios based on the battles featured in the New York Times No. 1 best seller Team Yankee.



Team Yankee © Prentice Press, 1987. Software 1990 Oxford Digital Enterprise. All rights reserved. IBM is a trademark of International Business Machines Inc. A mine is a trademark of Commodore Electronic Inc. Atari and ST are trademarks of Atari Corp. Team Yankee: The Novel was written by Harold Coyne. Made in the U.K.



Team Yankee is the definitive action simulation of modern tank warfare. Watch scenarios unfold on 3D battlefields with high definition graphics and keep track of the four tank platoons you control using the unique 4 quadrant display. Defend Hill 214 from Yuri Potecknov's crack tank platoons, attack Objective Link through sniper fire from forests, protect the Langen Gap from an entire Soviet tank battalion at night!



Engine smoke This will prove very useful in confusing your enemy if you find yourself in a tight corner.

Rotation icon and compass display.

Infra red (or thermal) imaging This feature is very useful for identifying vehicles camouflaged on the edge of forests. Contrary to popular belief the thermal image is green and not red.

Zoom. When this icon is accessed the central portion of the screen is magnified by a factor of 10.

Laser range finder. The range finder will lock on to a reflective target if the firing cursor is placed directly over the object.

Wide formation icon. This increases the spacing between vehicles in your platoon to 100 metres.

Narrow formation icon. This reduces the inter-vehicle spacing in your platoon to 50 metres.

Vee, a vee formation. Echelon right - places your vehicles on a right to left diagonal relative to your direction. Echelon left - places your vehicles on a left to right diagonal relative to your direction.

Wedge - places your vehicles in a wedge formation.

Scroll icon: The four arrows underneath the ETA display allow you to scroll your map in any of the four directions.

Dead Stop icon. This red icon, causes your platoon to come to a dead halt when clicked.



In line - places your vehicles in a line abreast relative to your direction.

Column - places your vehicles in a line ahead relative to your direction.

QED

Fancy yourself as a bit of a games whizz? Or maybe you're a complete dunce who can't get past the first screen - either way, why not drop us a line to QED, PC Leisure, EMAP Images, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

PIPING HOT

Dear QED,
Here are all the codes to *Pipe Mania* so that you can have a quick bash on all of the levels.

HAHA
GRIN
REAP
SEED
GROW
TALL
YALI

And don't forget that there's a bonus of 8,000 points for five crosses of pipe.

Jonathan Ricks
Tunbridge Wells
Kent

Cheers mate, get in touch with us here at the office and we'll sort you out a piece of software for your troubles.

DRUNK DRIVERS AND SEX CHANGES

Dear Sir,
Are you familiar with Sierra's *Police Quest* (the first one)? I am absolutely stumped on how to arrest the drunk Art Serabien. I've told him to get out of the car, I've searched him, smelt the alcohol on his breath, read him his rights and so on, but I just can't arrest him. I've never yet come across a Sierra game that I can't solve, but this one has me stumped. Any suggestions?

Actually while I'm at it, there is one other game that I found a bit sticky. I was playing *Larry II* on a friend's computer and was having trouble in completing my sex change. I only needed to full out my bust and I would have got past the guards, but again it was not to be. Please satisfy my curiosity and tell

me what I should have done.

Jonathan Roch-Berry
Wool
Dorset

MORE LARRY

Dear QED,
I'm stuck on *Leisure Suit Larry II*. How do you get past the agents on Nontoot Island. Is there any way you can help me?
Alex Stevens
Shapton Mallet
Somerset
Let's deal with Jonathan first, shall we? To arrest the drunk driver, wait until he starts to weave about then pursue him in 'Code 3' until he pulls over, then park and get out. Now, look at the number plate and 'radio in' to base. Walk to the car, talk to the driver, and smell his breath. Tell him to get out of the car and once he does, perform FST and you should now be able to handcuff him. And that's all there is to it.

Moving swiftly along to the Leisure Suit Larry queries...



Ain't she sweet? Not in Rainbird's *Weird Dreams* she ain't!

As for your sex-change Jon, it's really only a disguise to get past the KGB agents on the beach. But, if for personal reasons, you'd prefer the sex change, then try using the soap to fill out your bust when you're wearing the bikini and then go to the barber's shop and get yourself waxed. Now just add a flower from the garden and you should get past the guards without any problem. Okay?

LOST LORD

Dear QED,
Two months ago I bought *Ultima V* and so far I've been very successful with it. I've managed to complete the holy quests, kill the shadowlords and retrieve Lord British's artifacts.

Now, the only thing left for me to do is to actually free Lord British himself. I know that he is at the centre of the underworld, but I don't know how to get there. Please can you help me complete this gripping adventure?

William Miles
Earley

Reading

Sorry Miles, but the normally ace QED team is just as stumped as you are. Is there anyone out there who can help? The much sought-after incentive of a piece of software of your choice is going begging for anyone who can get to the bottom of this one.

Dear Sir,
At the moment I am having a lot of problems with Rainbird's *Weird Dreams*. Firstly, two of the mirrors have 'Out Of Order' printed across them. How do you get them to work?

Secondly, once you get past the man-eating roses you come to a girl who wants to play catch with her man-eating ball. How do you get past her? If I manage to catch the ball more than three times then it eats me, but if the ball goes off the screen then the girl comes up and stabs me with a mean-looking machete.

Joseph King
Bolton
Lancs

What a nightmare! Firstly, don't worry about the blocked mirrors, you'll only come to them much later. So let's concentrate on that sweet little girl with the psychotic tendencies: position yourself so that your head is directly in line with the empty arch in the hedge. When she throws the ball, count five bounces before you crouch to catch it and throw it back. She throws the ball at you six times before she gets out a steak knife and comes at you. Wait for her to get close and then throw the ball at her. Simple in theory, but it will probably take some practice to master.

COME TOGETHER

We've noticed from your letters over the past few months, that most of you who have completed games have no objection to sharing the knowledge that you've picked up along the way. So, in order to put you directly in touch with the people who really need the advice, from next month we're going to run a contacts section where readers can get in touch with each other directly to swap help and advice. If you would like to be included in this section, send your name, address, telephone number (and times when you can be contacted) along with the names of games on which you can offer advice to: **QED Contacts, PC Leisure, EMAP Images, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU**. Remember that this is a completely voluntary service, so make sure that you're both willing and able to give some genuine assistance before adding your name to the list.

HOW TO BE A HELICOPTER HERO

To begin, the helicopter which you choose to undertake your mission can make all the difference between failure and success, so make sure that you pick a suitable bird. Unless you've chosen a rescue mission, always go for the Apache or the LHX. The LHX because it carries more Sidewinders and more cannon rounds, and the Apache because it carries eight extra Hellfire missiles.

Never, ever, take a Blackhawk unless you are an absolute expert after a real challenge. It's the slowest ship of the lot, the guidance system isn't half as easy to use as any of the other helicopters and it has a poor weapons system.

In rescue missions, the Osprey is the bird for you, but beginners are advised to mount the eight Hellfire missiles rather than TOWs, because the latter, being wire-guided, are very difficult to control in the heat of battle.

HOW TO BE AN OLD, BOLD PILOT

If you want to avoid losing your pilot, remember that you can always quit the game by resetting your machine (by holding down CTRL, ALT and DEL). Apart from the moment you are about to hit the ground at 250 mph, there are certain other situations where it's wise to quit like this.

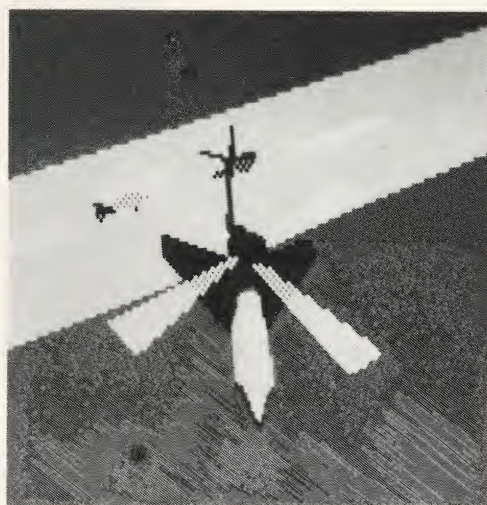
1) If your control lines or tail fan are hit, you will stay in the air, but with little control and very little chance of getting back to base intact.

2) If the fuel tank, oil tank or hydraulics are hit, their vital fluids will start to leak away quickly, so you will either run out of fuel and crash, lose oil until the engine seizes up, or lose all speed because there is no hydraulic fluid to maintain the rotors' pitch and provide thrust.

3) If you are forced down behind enemy lines.

Remember, if you're in the LHX or the Osprey and one of your Multi-Function Displays is shot out, you can reconfigure the others to display the lost information by pressing CTRL and the relevant key.

Should you lose all your hard-



Take the co-pilot's seat beside Paul Glancey as he takes you through the fundamentals of Electronic Arts' LHX Attack Chopper.

points except number one (the cannon), don't despair - it is still possible to shoot down enemy aircraft. Cannon fire does not lock on to airborne targets though, it just fires towards the targetting cross in the centre of the HUD, so wait until the target is either flying towards you or away, and aim just ahead of it. Fire off several bursts and you should see it spinning earthward. It doesn't take many cannon hits to destroy a chopper.

ACCELERATED TIME

Only switch to accelerated-time at the start or the end of the mission, when you are under no threat of ground bombardment. It's all too easy to forget you've activated it, only to find that you've suddenly got missiles chasing you at double speed, MiG's swooping around your head at warp eight, and you're losing battles twice as quickly.

If you're playing on an 8 Mhz machine, I'm afraid you're going to have to sacrifice looks for speed, so hit Escape, cursor along to the Sim menu and select Low Detail. Going into battle with the whole landscape switched on makes the game jerky and difficult to control, especially when it's trying to draw six enemy helicopters and a dozen heat-seeking missiles homing in on your exhaust!

GROUND TARGETS

Always keep an eye out for lone

enemy soldiers, because although you may sneer at their AK-47s, they can easily take out your camera, or bust a gauge, or even shoot you! If they're carrying single-shot surface-to-air missile launchers things are even worse, but these missiles are easily fooled with a flare, and then you can bear down on the soldier and blow him to bits with a single burst of cannon fire.

MOVING TARGETS

In the seek-and-destroy sorties which require you to shoot down an enemy helicopter (the Aerial Intercept and Chemical Warfare missions), the waypoints are automatically set to Enemy Origin and Enemy Destination. Don't follow them to these locations because by the time you reach the first waypoint, they will almost certainly have left already and you'll be struggling to keep up with them.

Instead, fly to a point halfway between the destination and the origin and wait for them to come to you.

If you haven't been spending time taking out ground targets on the way, you should get to the halfway point with a couple of minutes to spare before the enemy choppers appear on the Radar Warning Receiver. Spend this time putting the torch to any nearby SAM sites, tanks and anti-aircraft guns - in a little while there'll be quite enough things shooting at you, so anything

you can get rid of at this early stage is best eliminated.

Once you've cleaned up the ground forces, climb to between 1,000 and 1,300 feet - approximately the height the enemy will be coming in at, and the best position in helicopter combat is always above your enemy. The other thing is, of course, that you don't want to have to start pulling the nose up to spot your enemy, because you'll start moving backwards slowly and will be a sitting duck. You should be able to tell whether you're higher or lower when they appear on the RWR - a darker trace indicates a target below you and a light blue trace shows it's above (unless you're playing in CGA, in which case they both look the same and you'll just have to guess).

One other tip - if the halfway point happens to be above some large landmark, like a hill or a factory complex, don't go into battle there. Once the program starts trying to draw seven helicopters at once, plus a massive ground feature, things get very slow and jerky, making combat even more difficult.

It's worth remembering that in the helicopter missions, there's only one helicopter you need to destroy: the Mi-8 Hip-C transport. So as soon as the enemy comes into visual range, keep hitting the target designator key until the reticle is over the Hip (it's a slightly rotund, grey helicopter) and loose off a Sidewinder - if you don't have any of those, deal them a Hellfire.

It's very important that you do this, because once the battle starts, the escort ships (either Hinds or Havocs, or both) will keep you busy with their air-to-air missiles while the Hip gets away. In fact, by the time you've destroyed the escorts, the target helicopter will more than likely be sitting on the landing pad at its destination or dropping Green Rain, and you'll have failed the mission.

These are two of the toughest sorties, so unless you're very good (or very lucky) you can expect to come away from them with some pretty heavy damage. If you come away from them at all, that is.



KING'S QUEST: THE ROYAL SOLUTION

Ladies and gentlemen, a *PC Leisure* first... ardent gamerster Paul Adams of Hull in North Humberside has provided our first ever reader's complete solution. Could you do better? Why not prove it then, by sending your complete solutions (on disk if possible, saved as an ASCII file) to the usual address.

But for now, here's Paul's guide to completing the first ever *King's Quest* - and quite timely it is too, as the game has just been re-released with an all-new 'H-reg' look.

ONCE UPON A TIME

From the start, outside the castle, go over the small bridge and head West to the castle doors. Enter the castle and walk all the way to the King, then talk to him and he will tell you your quest.

Leave the castle again and go West over another small bridge. In this screen there should be a rock, move it and there is a dagger in the hole underneath. Take the dagger and go to the screen with the very large tree on the right side of the screen. Climb the tree and walk along the branch to

take the egg, then go back along the branch again.

Now go to the screen with the walnut-bearing tree, take a nut and open it. Go to the screen with the stump on the left and a hollow log nearby, get the pouch out of the stump and open it. Find the screen with the red ceramic bowl and take it, then go South one screen and talk to the elf that should appear, he will give you a magic ring.

Go to the woodcutter's house and give him the bowl. Go to the vegetable patch North of the castle and take a carrot. Now

go to the witch's gingerbread house and open the cupboard inside. Take the cheese and go to the bedroom. Take the note and read it. Wait for the witch to come and stand by the stove, then walk behind her and push her into the stove by typing 'kill witch'.

THE TROLL AND BRIDGE

Go to the goat's pen and open the gate. Go in and close the gate behind you. Find the goat and type 'show carrot' to make the goat follow you. Open the gate and walk to the nearest bridge that goes across the rapid stream, when the troll

comes, the goat will butt him into the stream.

Go across the bridge and talk to the gnome, make three guesses at his name then take the key he leaves behind. Now go to the patch of clover and take the four-leaved one in the middle. Go to the rapid stream where there are some pebbles by the water, get the pebbles.

CROSS THAT STREAM

Go to the screen with the cave entrance and a bird should come, when it swoops around try to jump and catch its legs. It will carry you over the stream and onto the island. Go West one screen and take the mushroom. Now return to the screen you were dropped in and drop down the hole.

Go South then West along the passage and give the cheese to the rat. Open the door and go South. Take the shield by the throne then go West. Stand by the small hole and eat the mushroom, then quickly go through the hole.

Now go to the well and take the bucket by cutting the rope. Lower the rope by turning the handle then

climb down the rope into the well. Drop off the bottom and start swimming, then fill the bucket and dive down. Enter the hole on the left and walk up to the dragon. Throw the water at him then take the mirror.

(RE)ENTER THE DRAGON

Go back through the small hole then return to the dragon screen (this earns you four points) and now go through the large hole on the left. Now go to the locked door and open it with the key. Go up the steps, if a dwarf appears then go back down a bit and then return, keep doing this until he doesn't appear.

Go up the last flight of steps and out of the cave. Go South and get the sling out of the hole in the tree. Go North and then West. Type 'use sling' and then get the chest. Return to the king and talk to him. The king dies after a few seconds (what timing) and you waste no time trying on his crown.

And that's just about it - you've now completed the first *King's Quest* (well, at least that's *one* way of doing it!).

SHOPPING LIST

One thing which came to light in our recent reader survey was that **PC Leisure** readers have difficulty finding local retail outlets to buy the latest in PC entertainment software from. As we aim to please, here's just some of your local shops: if we haven't included one in your locality, write to let us know and we'll see what we can do for next issue.

ALDRIDGE AUDIO

54 Bucks Rd
Douglas
Isle of Man
Tel: (0624) 23090

ANTICS

49 High Street
Stroud
Glos, GL5 1AN
Tel: (04537) 65920

ANTICS

89E Woodbridge Rd
Guilford Rd
Surrey, GU1 4QD
Tel: (0483) 39115

ANTICS

8 Fairfax Street
Bristol
Avon
Tel: (0272) 273744

ANTICS

16 St Swithins Street
Worcester
Worcs, WR1 2PS
Tel: (0905) 22335

ANTICS

8 Regent Circus
Swindon
Wiltshire, SN1 1JQ
Tel: (0793) 430417

AUDITION COMPUTER SERVICES

9A St Peters Street
Stamford
Lincs, PE9 3SW
Tel: (0780) 55888

BITS AND BYTES

High Street
Bognor Regis
West Sussex, PO21 1EH
Tel: (0243) 867143

BITS 'N' BYTES

267 London Rd
Northend
Portsmouth

BITS 'N' BYTES

19 Orwell Rd
Felixstone
Ipswich
Suffolk, IP11 7NY
Tel: (0394) 279266

BITS 'N' BYTES

47 Upper Orwell Street
Ipswich
Suffolk, IP4 1HP
Tel: (0473) 219961

BITS 'N' BYTES

8-12 Dial Lane
Ipswich, IP1 1DL

BRIDGEND COMP CENTRE

25 Wyndham Street
Bridgend
Mid Glamorgan

Tel: (0656) 667444

CHIPS COMPUTER SHOP

7 Dundas Street
Redcar
Langburgh
Couty Cleveland

CHIPS COMPUTER SHOP

Clarks Yard
Darlington
Durham, DL3 7QH
Tel: (0325) 381048

CHIPS COMPUTER SHOP

Unit 3
Silver Court
Silver Street
Stockton on Tees, TS1 8IX
Tel: (0642) 618256

CHIPS COMPUTER SHOP

1st Floor
151/153 Linthorpe Rd
Middlesbrough
Cleveland, TS1 4AS
Tel: (0642) 219139

COMPLEAT COMPUTING

1 Central Buildings
Railway Terrace
Rugby, CV21 3EL
Tel: (0788) 540198

COMPUTER BASE

21 Market Avenue
Plymouth, PL1 1PG
Tel: (0752) 672128

COMPUTER CORE

495-499 Oxford Rd
Reading
Berks, RG3 1HQ
Tel: (0734) 574650

COMPUTER MAN

Unit 1-10
Asda Complex
Wellcroft Shipley
West Yorks, BD18 3QH
Tel: (0274) 599837

COMPUTER MAN

16 Bit Centre
21 Wellcroft
Shipley, BD18 3QH
Tel: (0274) 531947

COMPUTER MAN

33 Swadford Street
(Belmont Bridge)
Skipton
North Yorks
Tel: (0756) 701413

COMPUTER MAN

53 Badildon Rd
Daildon
West Yorks
Tel: (0274) 584967

THE COMPUTER SHOP

4 Holland Walk
High Street
Barnstable, EX31 1DW

Tel: (0271) 78787

THE COMPUTER SHOP

123 Bournemouth Rd
Packstone, Poole
Dorset, BH14 9HR
Tel: (0202) 741258

COMTAZIA

4-6 The Arcade
Walshall
West Midlands
Tel: (0922) 614346

COMTAZIA

The Shopping Mall
Merryhill Shopping Centre
Brierley Hill
West Midlands, DY5 1SB
Tel: (0384) 261698

COMTAZIA

204 High Street
Dudley
West Midlands, DY1 1QQ
Tel: (0384) 239259

CRITERION COMPUTER SERVICES

De Carteret House
Hillgrove St
St Helier
Jersey
Tel: (0534) 77268

DIMENSION COMPUTERS

40-50 High Street
Leicester, LE1 5EU
Tel: (0533) 517479

DOWLING COMPUTERS

3 Harper Centre
Harpur Street
Bedford
Tel: (0234) 273090

DOWLING COMPUTERS

49 Railway Street
Hertford
Herts
Tel: (0992) 554469

DOWLING COMPUTERS

Cromwell Computers
5 Station Rd
St Ives, Cambs
Tel: (0480) 300800

DOWLING COMPUTERS

6 Priory Hall
St Neots, Cambs
Tel: (0480) 403304

EROL COMPUTERS

125 High Street
Walthamston
London, E17 7DB
Tel: (081) 520 7763

EVESHAM MICRO CENTRE

Wallstone Ltd
63 Bridge Street
Evesham
Worcs, WR11 4SF
Tel: (0386) 765614

EVESHAM MICRO CENTRE

5 Glisson Rd
Cambridge, CB1 2HA
Tel: (0223) 323898

HI-TEK

245 Broadway
Bexley Heath
Kent, DA6 8DB
Tel: (081) 303 4862

HJC SUPPLIES

Unit 2 The Archers
Icknield Way
Letchworth

Herts, SG6 1UJ

Tel: (0462) 481166

HOBBYTE

10 Market Place
St Albans
Herts, AL3 5DG
Tel: (0727) 56005

HOBBYTE

Unit 1G Arndale Centre
Luton
Beds, LU1 2PG
Tel: (0582) 457195

INTOTO

41 Castlefields
Main Centre
Derby, DE1 2PE
Tel: (0332) 49637

JARROLD DEPT STORE

London Street
Norwich
Norfolk, NR2 1JF
Tel: (0603) 660661

MANSFIELD COMPUTERS

33 Albert Street
Mansfield
Nottingham
Tel: (0623) 631202

MAYS HI-FI

Mays Hi-Fi
27 Churchgate
Leicester
Tel: (0533) 516789

MICRO FUN

43B Moorgate Rd
Rotherham
South Yorks, S60 2AU
Tel: (0709) 363293

MICRO FUN

10 Peel Street
Barnsley
South Yorks, S70 2QX
Tel: (0226) 207063

MICRO FUN

83 Holme Lane
Hillsborough
Sheffield
South Yorks, S6 4JP
Tel: (0742) 345002

MICRO FUN

14 Stephenson Place
Derby, S40 1XL
Tel: (0246) 550202

MICRO FUN

Unit 12
The Guardian Centre
Rotherham
South Yorks, S65 1DD
Tel: (0709) 360000

MICRO FUN

38 Newcastle Avenue
Workop
Notts, S80 1ET
Tel: (0909) 478877

THE MICRO SHOP

271-275 Dumbarton Rd
G11 6AR
(041) 339 0832

MICRO STORE

35-36 Singleton Street
Swansea
West Glamorgan, SA1 3QN
Tel: (0792) 467980

THE MODEL SHOP

22 Castle Arcade
Cardiff

South Wales, CF12BW

Tel: (0222) 229065

THE MODEL SHOP

79 Northgate Street
Gloucester
Gloucestershire, GL1 2AG
Tel: (0452) 410693

THE MODEL SHOP

11 Old Town Street
Plymouth
Devon, PL1 1DA
Tel: (0752) 221851

PILOT SOFTWARE

32 Rathbone Place
London, W1P 1AD
Tel: (071) 636 2666

SERV-U COMPUTERS

1-7 College Street
Northampton
Tel: 33922

SHEKHANA COMPUTERS SERVICES

221 Tottenham Court Rd
London, W1R 9AF
Tel: (071) 631 4627

SHEKHANA COMPUTERS SERVICES

2 Gladstone House
Wood Green
London, N22 0AA
Tel: (081) 889 9412

SOFT CENTRE

28-30 The Parade
Cwmbran Town Centre
Gwent
Tel: (06333) 68131

SOFT CENTRE

34 Reign Gate
Hereford
Worcester
Tel: (0432) 342381

SOFT SPOT

5-6 Broad Street
Banbury
Oxon, OX16 8BN
Tel: (0295) 68921

SOFT SPOT

4 Lincoln House
Turl Street
Oxford
Tel: (0865) 794202

SOFTWARE CITY

1 Goodhall Street
Walsall
West Midlands, WS1 1QG
Tel: (0922) 24821

SOFTWARE CITY

3 Lichfield Passage
Wolverhampton
West Midlands, WV1 1DZ
Tel: (0902) 712703

THE SOFTWARE SHOP

8 The Arcade
Eltham High Street
London, SE9 1BE
Tel: (081) 850 6177

SRS MICROSYSTEMS

94 The Parade
Watford
Herts
Tel: (0923) 226602

THINKPLAN

3 Riverside Walk
Bishops Cleeve
Herts, CM23 3AJ
Tel: (0279) 506535

SEND IN THE CLOWNS

Any confused clergyman who suffers from writer's block when composing his Sunday sermon should head post haste to Software Circus in London's Oxford Street, for there, resting righteously on the shelf, could be the answer to the perplexed preacher's prayers.

For a mere £69.95, the entire content of the Holy Bible is now available for a pastor's perusal on his computer screen in the form of a clever little program called Wordsearch: Computer Bible. Relevant passages, areas of interest and specific scriptures can all be called up at the press of a button - thus freeing ample time which can be put to better use tending the flock and so on.

However, rural-based theologians can stop rubbing their hands together with glee right now, because the program is only available through Software Circus, being just one of a plethora of packages that the firm imports directly from the States, bypassing UK publishers in a bid to serve its customers' every requirement.

In a market that boasts several hundred computer software outlets, Software Circus prides itself on being unique - and not only because of its American import policy. Ask the company's managing director, Steve Markham, to sum up just why Software Circus is so different and one word immediately comes to the fore - professionalism.

When Software Circus first opened its doors to the public, way back in August 1988, Markham's bold claims of shaking up the software retailing industry were largely taken with a pinch of salt. Considered something of an upstart, Markham spouted forth a philosophy of service which he deemed to be sadly lacking in existing software stores. A few feathers were, not surprisingly, ruffled.

"I was not, and am not, trying to be big-headed about this," explains Markham, "but from day one we have been a highly professional company, which you can see from the way we operate. We didn't just

Kelly Beswick goes shopping with a maverick retailer who doesn't mind stepping on publishers toes in his crusade to bring the latest in US software to these shores.

Steve Markham (left), with retail director Ken Milton, pictured in the Oxford Street branch.



think 'hey, let's open a retail store' and then open one. We planned and researched the market for nearly two years. Also, I went to the States on a regular basis to look at alternative concepts over there.

"From seeing how stores operated in America, we developed our whole philosophy on service. We understand how people want to buy from a shop. I think this is a rarity in the UK software business, which is still a fairly immature market."

Indeed, upon entering Software Circus, you immediately realise what Markham is talking about, for he has clearly put his money where his mouth is, taking software out of the realms of the hobbyist market into that of a slick and sophisticated selling operation.

DESIGNER FEEL

The first thing which strikes a new customer is the designer feel to the place, from the decor and colour scheme through to shelving and lighting. Clearly this has not occurred by chance, with Markham readily testifying that consider-

able time and money has been spent on achieving the correct image. Indeed, that image also extends to the store's sales staff, who are all formally attired, well versed in good manners and are always ready with a helpful approach.

The shop is split into two categories, with 16-bit products (for the ST and Amiga computers) downstairs and the top floor dedicated to the PC. Once again, the decision to divide the formats was well thought out by Markham: "We recognised that, on the whole, IBM customers do not like shopping with ST and Amiga customers. The purchaser of PC products tends to be older and more serious and prefers a separated environment."

Software Circus specialises in a wide range of PC products including entertainment, education, productivity and business programs, with the firm stocking a total of roughly 1,500 different titles. All of the products are categorised on the shelf - for example, entertainment titles are housed in a separate section, within which arcade, simulation, adventure and strategy games all have their own niches.



Yet the categorisation does not stop there. Indeed, such is Markham's fastidiousness when it comes to clearly categorising products that each section contains sub-divisions, with the simulation section identifying flight, submarine and practically any other type of simulation you'd care to mention.

EASY RECOGNITION

"I think it's extremely important that a customer can walk into a shop and immediately recognise exactly where the various products are," explains Markham. "We have positioned everything for the ease of the customer. For example, all the hint books are placed directly above the relevant titles, while any new title that comes in carries a special sign marking it as being new."

"If you look at the education section, the packages are set out not only according to their subject matter but also according to the age groups which they are targeted at. Everything that we do is designed to assist the customer and provide that all-important service."

Indeed, Software Circus caters for the PC user's every need, although the firm has steered clear of selling computers, a fact that Markham also cites as making his company unique. "We are the only store in the country that sells just software, every other dealer sells computers as well. We made that decision to specialise right at the beginning, and it has certainly paid off."

Having said that however, magazines, books, joysticks and a wealth of other accessories fill the store, ranging from the practical to the ridiculous, with cheese mouse pads and stick-on bugs definitely falling into the latter category.

As well as the software a large proportion of the accessories are also imported from the States, which Markham affectionately refers to as his 'second home'. Yet, it is a constant source of irritation to Markham, particularly on the software side, that he must consistently resort to importing products.

"There must be over 100 IBM-compatible manufacturers now, selling strongly in the UK. Yet, the PC isn't taken seriously in

The interior of the newly-opened Holborn branch: "...we don't want to open stores on the same format just for the sake of it."

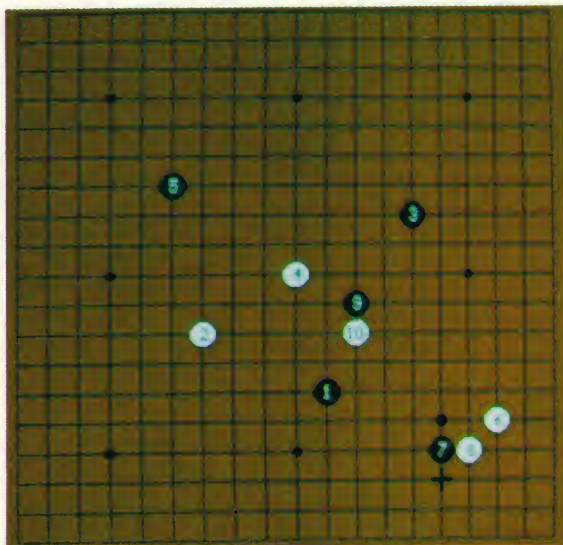
this country by anyone in the leisure market. It's the biggest market in the UK, and I've had some people say that I am very controversial in thinking that, but it is - we know it for ourselves.

BACK DOOR

"Importing is something we've done right from the beginning. If a brilliant PC game comes out in America it can take up to six months to reach the UK. This is largely because publishers will wait until it's been converted to other formats, they don't identify the market as being strong enough to carry a title on its own."

As a result Markham has had several scrapes with irate UK publishers, who firmly believe that Software Circus' 'back door tactic' of offering a product before its official UK release, is ultimately harmful to business.

"When we've brought a great product in, certain magazines contact us and write about it, long before it's officially due out. So when the game is actually released and the publishers turn around and say 'right guys here's such and such a



product', the mags then turn around and say 'we previewed that six months ago'."

MAVERICK

Yet, while Markham can understand the publishers' chagrin at a small retail outlet stealing its thunder, Software Circus looks likely to retain its maverick approach for the time being. On the one hand, by stocking product unavailable anywhere else in the UK, the firm does gain a considerable amount of kudos and Markham admits: "we do like to carry different things from anyone else." In addition to this however, Markham believes that a large proportion of publishers fail to give adequate merchandising support to retailers, particularly those who are trying to imbue their stores with a more exciting and professional image, and if they won't help him, then he's adamant that he won't help them.

"For us, a window display doesn't just consist of a few posters and a couple of dummy boxes. Just because other retailers accept this, it doesn't mean that we have to. We've had some great comments made to us like 'why do you always have to be different?' or 'why do you always say it isn't good enough?', and while we don't really like rocking the boat, it seems that everything we do has that effect.

SOUR GRAPES

"So, ultimately, the way I look at it is, why should I stop doing something that I'm good at (bringing new product over from the States) to help a software publisher when they're not giving us any merchandise." And if that smacks of sour grapes, then as far as Markham's concerned - so be it.

Now, with Software Circus currently gearing up for the Christmas onslaught, Markham has just put in a large order for imported games. "Over the next month or two we'll be taking on quite a few US games that haven't yet arrived here. It's going to be a big range, in the region of around 50 titles."

One of these imports which Markham immediately enthuses about is

Go! A version of the traditional Japanese board game (see opposite).

Cybergenic Rangers, a creation of an independent Stateside programming team, Symtus.

At this stage Markham is not treading on anyone's toes with the title, as Symtus has yet to find a UK distributor, but so impressed was Markham with the product that it should make the shelves of Software Circus in time for Christmas.

"It's a really great game, I first saw it at Comdex [America's IBM computer trade show] and it looked fantastic. It's a combination of adventure, animation and role playing, with all of the graphics created by artists from DC Comics." Indeed, Markham prides himself on being able to recognise a good product when he sees one, a talent that's developed from over 10 years experience in the software industry, initially as a programmer and, prior to the foundation of Software Circus, as a distributor.

Now, however, in retail land, Markham appears to have finally found his niche, and as evidence of this fact, last November witnessed the opening of Software Circus' second store, based in Holborn, in London's City area.

"We specifically wanted to open our second shop right in the centre of the City, in an area that's a prime marketplace. The

will look very much the same as Holborn."

Indeed, come next year, Software Circus will be spreading beyond the perimeters of the Metropolis, and although Markham is loathe to provide a figure on how many new stores will be opening and at what locations, plans are apparently well under way, with 1991 pencilled in as Software Circus' year of major expansion.

SCEPTICISM

Yet, when Markham first foisted the concept of Software Circus on the software world, he admits to making some rather bullish predictions, not least of which was a rather extravagant claim that he would open 10 stores within the first year. This, he now confesses, was a reaction to the industry's scepticism. "When I first opened the store, I used to have a philosophy of growth, that mainly sprang from the comments of the industry, which at that time was saying 'another software store, so what'. As a result, I said that we were going to be opening a lot of stores in the first few years, which clearly, we haven't done.

"The reason for this is that I realised that it wasn't all that important. What is important is that we can serve the customer 100 per cent, and that's not all



Race against the world's fastest with Carl Lewis in *Go For The Gold*.

new store is 95 per cent PC products - for us, that is the future. The PC products featured are split more or less 50/50 between business and leisure, which I think at this stage is the right balance."

The Holborn store is distinctly different in style and atmosphere to its Oxford Street predecessor. As Markham puts it: "It does have a different look to it, but that's because we don't want to open stores on the same format just for the sake of it. The Oxford Street branch was like a learning curve for us.

"Now, with Holborn, we have gone for a much warmer look, which I believe creates a greater enthusiasm for the customer to stay longer in the store. I think that with this new image, we've hit the right note, any future stores that we open

about shifting boxes and opening stores for the sake of it, just to say to other people that we did it, without necessarily getting it right. Now, however, I think that we have got it right, and the time has come to start that expansion."

When it comes to analysing why Software Circus has finally achieved a certain degree of success and respect as one of the country's more salubrious styles of software store, Markham offers the following explanation: "We sell at retail price and we don't discount any of our products, so people aren't coming to us because we're particularly cheap. What we're offering is a good service. People know when they walk into our store that we're not there to rip them off. Software Circus looks like a good store, from its decor to

MR. BOSTON OFFICIAL MICRO BARTENDER'S GUIDE

Drink 1 in File LIQUORS - VOLUME 1 - 2nd Edition

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Name: | ABBEY COCKTAIL |
| 2. Key Liquor: | GIN |
| 3. Category: | COCKTAIL |
| 4. Temperature: | COLD |
| 5. Serve: | COCKTAILS, EVENING |
| 6. Season: | SPRING, SUMMER |
| 7. Occasion: | |
| 8. VIP/Notes: | |
| 9. VIP/Notes: | |

(E)dit, (P)rint, (R)ecipe,
(D)elete, (M)ar(K), (B)lack, (F)orward,
(C)hange Search, (M)ain Menu: _

its range of products and right the way through to the presentability of our staff.

"All we've done really, is move the concept of a software shop out of the hobbyist market. It all comes down to understanding the people who buy software and how they want to buy it. Yet, even if I stood up and said to other dealers: 'this is the way you should sell in your stores', I really don't think that many of them would listen, because in this industry few people understand the philosophy of service."

Clearly Markham is a man who's not afraid to put himself out on a limb, frequently upsetting fellow retailers and publishers alike in what appears to be something of a personal crusade to shake up the business of selling software. And while some may question whether his approach has been beneficial to the industry as a whole, few can deny its benefit to the customer, and for Markham that is really the only person who counts.

CIRCUS ATTRACTIONS

The following are just some of the US imports currently available exclusively through Software Cicus...

COUNTDOWN

The latest in a long series from Access software (the company behind the ever-green Leaderboard golf series, and, more recently, the interactive action games Mean Streets and Crime Wave), Countdown announces itself as an 'interactive movie of intrigue, espionage and suspense' and comes complete with all-new 256-colour VGA graphics (and very pretty they are too). Agent McBain is dead... but why did they pin it on you? If you fancy the challenge (and have £34.95 to spare) you have 96 hours to find out.

JUST THE FAX

"A fax for every occasion" is promised from this print program from Britannica Software. Dozens of templates, different typesets, decorative borders and clip art illustrations allow the user to create eye-catching cover sheets which should make

sure that their faxes never go unnoticed. All of this and an 'on-line' phone book for £24.95.

THE SOUND SOURCE

A hardware device for use with the majority of the new Disney programs, The Sound Source plugs directly into the parallel port to produce digitised speech and sound effects from compatible software. It's unclear as yet whether other publishers will support this standard, however at only £24.95 it still represents good value for money - even if it's only used for Mickey Mouse programs.

OFFICIAL MR BOSTON MICRO BARTENDER'S GUIDE

Endorsed by, and based upon, the legendary US bartenders' bible, this program includes 1,000 classic and contemporary drink recipes, a comprehensive wine section, and a section on low-alcohol drinks for the health and safety conscious. All of this and the facility for complete printouts and numerous database applications

Keeping the party swinging with Mr. Boston's official grog guide.

Digitised delights in Countdown from Access.

(including the ability to recall guests' preferences and so on) for the price of a good bottle of Champagne (well, £24.95 to be exact).

GO!

Not one, but two programs to recreate the drama and excitement of the classic Japanese board game which has inspired so much over the years - including the name of the computer company Atari. The two versions are Junior - an introduction to the game's basic moves - and Master, which as the name suggests is a simulation for the more advanced player.

CARL LEWIS' GO FOR THE GOLD

Build yourself up to become Decathlon material, until you eventually feel ready to take on the great sprinter himself over the full 10 events in this multi-game sports simulation from Gametek - once again priced at £24.95.

CALORIE COUNTER PLUS

Another useful 'lifestyle' program from the appropriately named Lifestyle Software Group (the company behind Mr Boston's booze guide), this is a bonus for weight watchers everywhere. Monitoring everything weight-wise, from calorie and cholesterol intake to daily intake of nutrients, this program also warns of unhealthy levels of fat, sodium and caffeine and even covers fast foods! If you think you could do with some help in the fight against the flab, this program could make a powerful ally for only £24.95.

FACT BOX

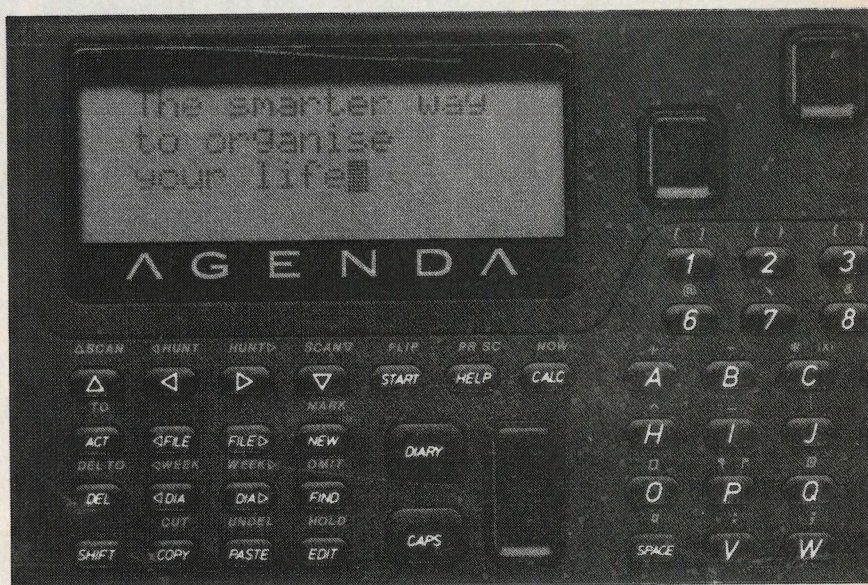
Contact Software Cicus at
Oxford Street on (071) 436 2811,
or Holborn (071) 404 4492.



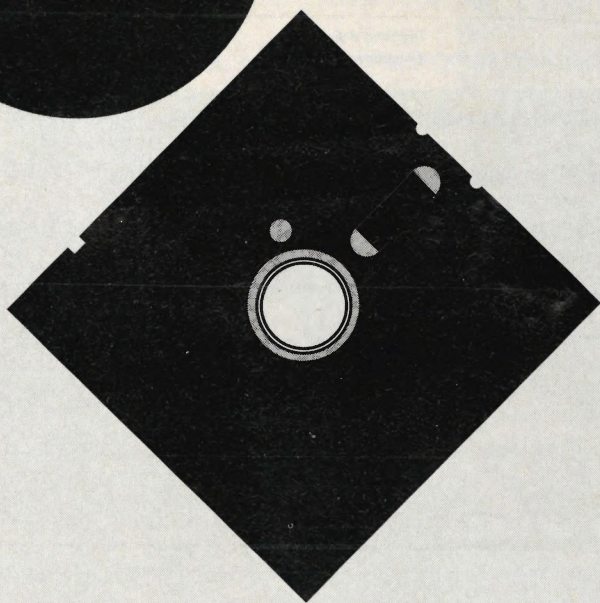
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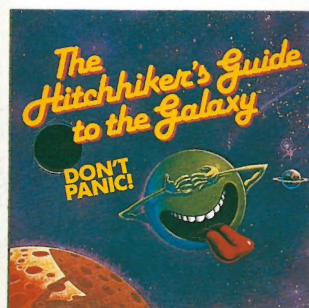
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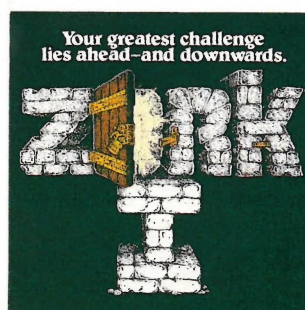
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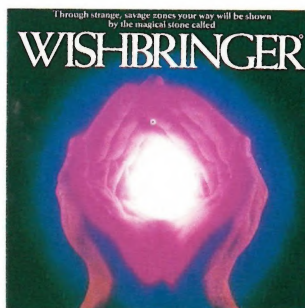
ZORK I -

This phenomenally popular story plunges you into the extraordinary environs of the Great Underground Empire in search of incomparable treasures. You'll come face to face with outlandish creatures as you make an amazing odyssey with so many twists it can offer new surprises every time you explore it.



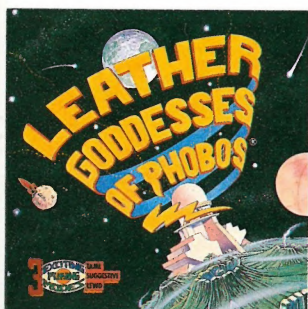
PLANETFALL -

In this sci-fi comedy, you're a stellar Patrol Ensign 7th class - as low as you can go. Then your luck takes a turn for the better. Your patrol ship explodes. True, the mysterious, deserted world to which you're jettisoned is plagued by floods, pestilence and a mutant Wild Kingdom, but you'll have Floyd, a mischievous robot, to help you find the secret to saving it.



WISHBRINGER -

You begin as an ordinary mail clerk delivering a mysterious random note and end up - magic stone in hand - embarking on a remarkable series of whimsical adventures. You'll need all the wishes that the stone will grant you, because your final destination is somewhere beyond your wildest dreams.



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You've been kidnapped by minions of the fiendish Leather Goddesses of Phobos who are plotting to turn the earth into their private pleasure palace. Succeed in escaping their clutches and you'll begin a naughty, bawdy and very amusing romp across the solar system. Your mission is to collect the materials you'll need to defeat the Leather Goddess and save humanity from their dastardly plan.

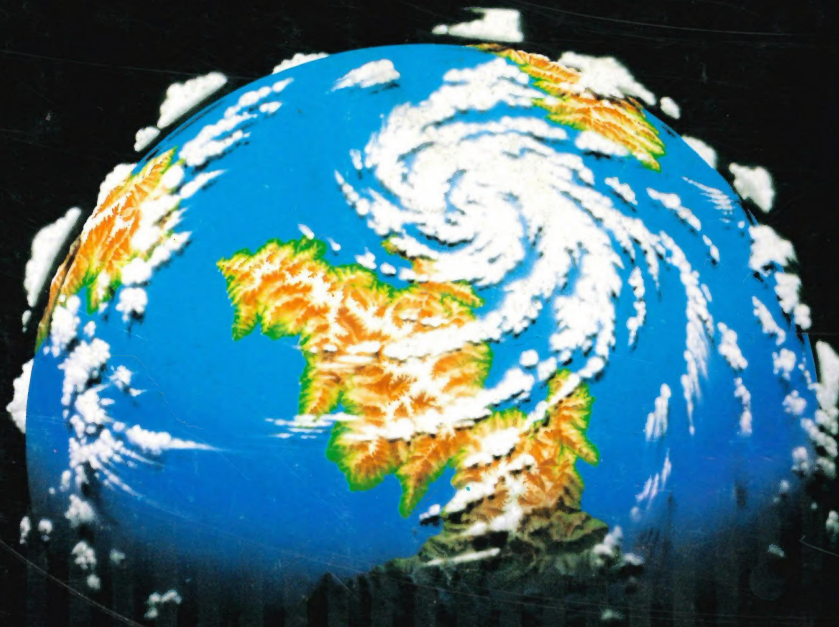
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